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THE CONQUEST

OF

ENGLAND

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

WITH PORTRAIT AND MAPS

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PREFACE

A FEW words of introduction are needed to the following unfinished story of the "Conquest of England," in which I may explain how far these pages in their present form represent the final work and intention of their writer. I cannot do this save by giving some short account of how the book was written, and the tale of the two works, the "Making of England" and the "Conquest of England," forms in fact but one story.

After Mr. Green had closed the fourth volume of his *History of the English People*, an apparent pause in the illness against which he had long been struggling made it seem possible that some years of life might yet lie before him. For the first time he could look forward to labour less fettered and hindered than of old by stress of weakness, in which he might gather up the fruit of past years of preparation; and with the vehement

ardour of a new hope he threw himself into schemes of work till then denied him. But he had scarcely begun to shape his plans when they were suddenly cut down. In the early spring of 1881 he was seized by a violent attack of illness, and it needed but a little time to show that there could never be any return to hope. The days that might still be left to him must henceforth be conquered day by day from death. In the extremity of ruin and defeat he found a higher fidelity and a perfect strength. The way of success was closed, the way of courageous effort still lay open. Touched with the spirit of that impassioned patriotism which animated all his powers, he believed that before he died some faithful work might yet be accomplished for those who should come after him. At the moment of his greatest bodily weakness, when fear had deepened into the conviction that he had scarcely a few weeks to live, his decision was made. The old plans for work were taken out, and from these a new scheme was rapidly drawn up in such a form that if strength lasted it might be wrought into a continuous narrative, while if life failed some finished part of it might be embodied in the earlier *History*. Thus under the shadow of death the *Making of England* was begun. During the five summer months in which

it was written that shadow never lifted. It was the opinion of his doctors that life was only prolonged from day to day throughout that time by the astonishing force of his own will, by the constancy of a resolve that had wholly set aside all personal aims. His courage took no touch of gloom or disappointment; every moment of comparative ease was given to his task; when such moments failed, hours of languor and distress were given with the same unfaltering patience. As he lay worn with sickness, in his extreme weakness unable to write a line with his own hand, he was forced for the first time to learn how to dictate; he had not even strength himself to mark the corrections on his printer's proofs, and these too were dictated by him, while the references for the volume were drawn up as books were carried one by one to his bedside, and the notes from them entered by his directions. With such sustained zeal, such eager conscientiousness was his work done, that much of it was wholly rewritten five times, other parts three times; till as autumn drew on he was driven from England, and it became needful to bring the book rapidly to an end which fell short of his original scheme, and to close the last chapters with less finish and fulness of labour.

The spring of 1882 found the same frail and suffering life still left to him. But sickness had no force to quench the ardour of his spirit. Careful only to save what time might yet remain for his work he hastened to England in May, and once more all sense of weakness seemed to vanish before the joy of coming again to his own land. He had long eagerly desired to press forward to later periods of English history, in which the more varied forces at work in the national life, and the larger issues that hung on them, might give free play to his own personal sympathies. But the conditions of his life shut out the possibility of choice; and he resolutely turned again to the interrupted history of early England, to take up the tale at the period of its greatest obscurity and difficulty. In the scheme which was drawn up at this time the present work was to have closed with the "Conquest of England" by the Danes. This plan was in fact a return to the division adopted in the *Short History of the English People*, where the conquest by Swein was looked on as the turning-point of the story, and a new period in the history of England began from the time when the English people first bowed to the yoke of foreign masters, and "kings from Denmark were succeeded by kings from Normandy, and these by kings from

Anjou." The eight chapters which bring the narrative to the Danish Conquest form the work that filled the last months of his life—a work still carried on with the same patient and enduring force, and done with that careful haste which comes of the knowledge that each month's toil may be the last. The book in this earlier form was finished and printed in the autumn, though in the pressing peril of the time the final chapters were so brief as to be scarcely more than outlines. Once more he was forced to leave England for the south. In spite of fast-increasing illness, and oppressed by heavy suffering, he there reviewed his whole work with earnest care. It seemed to him still far from his conception of what it might be; the difficulty of the subject roused in him a fresh desire to bring it home with living interest to his readers; and he believed this might be done by some added labour on his part. He resolved to make important changes in the original plan and in its order, to rewrite some portions, and to extend the history beyond the Conquest of England by the Danes to its Conquest by the Normans. The printed book was at once cancelled. With a last effort of supreme ardour and devotion, he set himself to a task which he was never to finish. A new opening chapter was formed by drawing

together the materials he possessed for a sketch of the English people at the opening of their long struggle with the invaders. But as the chapter drew towards its end his strength failed. The pages which now close it were the last words ever written by his hand—words written one morning in haste, for weakness had already drawn on so fast that when in weariness he at last laid down his pen he never again found strength even to read over the words he had set down.

But even then his work was not over. In this last extremity of weakness his mind still turned constantly to the story of his people. He would still hope, night by night, that on the coming day there might be some brief moment in which he could even yet dictate the thoughts that were shaping themselves in his mind — some larger account of the history of the English shires which was now taking form after long thinking, or some completer view of the rule of the Danish kings, or some insight of a more sure judgement and knowledge into the relations of the Norman Conquest. Many years before, listening to some light talk about the epitaphs which men might win, he had said half unconsciously, "I know what men will say of me: '*He died learning;*'" and he made the passing word into a noble truth. "So long as he

lived he strove to live worthily." By patient and laborious work, by reverence and singleness of purpose, by a long self-mastery, he had "earned diligently" his due reward in experience, knowledge, matured wisdom, a wider outlook, and a deeper insight. It was impossible for him not to know that his powers were only now coming to their full strength, and that his real work lay yet before him. "I have work to do that I *know* is good," he said when he heard he had only a few days to live. "I will try to win but one week more to write some part of it down." Another conquest than this however lay before him. It was as death drew nearer still that for the first time he said, "Now I am weary; I can work no more." Thus he laid down with uncomplaining patience the task he had taken up with unflinching courage. "God so granted it him." In those last days, as in his latest thoughts, the great love he bore his country was still as it had ever been the true inspiration of his life. The single aim that guided all his work till the end came, was the desire to quicken in others that eager sense which he himself had of how rich the inheritance of our fathers is with the promise of the future, and to bring home to every Englishman some part of the beauty that kindled his own enthusiasm in

the story, whether old or new, of the English People.

A very few words will explain the work which was left to me by my husband to do in preparing this volume for publication. In the earlier part of the book I have carried out the alterations in the order of subjects which had been decided on by him, and the first six chapters may be looked on as representing his final plan, save that some alterations would have been made in the first chapter, and some passages, such as the account of the shires, were not rewritten as he had intended. Chapters vii. and viii. were left in a wholly unfinished state, having been laid aside for consideration and revision. The materials for them had not even been drawn into any consecutive order, and I am responsible for the division and naming of these chapters, and in great part for the arrangement of the subjects.

The closing chapters (ix., x., xi.), which have been included in the book according to Mr. Green's later plan, stand on a different footing from the rest. They were written many years ago, I believe in 1875, and were then laid aside and never revised in any way. The materials for them existed partly in a printed form, and partly in manuscript notes

and papers, all alike written some years ago, and consisting merely of very rough and imperfect fragments hastily jotted down and then thrown aside. My work has been to draw these various parts together into a connected whole; and in order to carry on the unfinished tale to the Norman Conquest I have inserted some pages (vol. ii. pp. 295-306) from the earlier *History of the English People*. These chapters then, wholly unrevised and dealing with the history of the eleventh century in a partial way only, and under some of its aspects, must be looked on as incomplete outlines. It had been Mr. Green's hope to enrich them by a careful study of the social history of England during this period, and an indication of the kind of work that might have been done in this direction will be found in the passage (vol. ii. pp. 148-182) which describes London and the trading towns. This was part of his latest work last autumn, and has been inserted into the story of the reign of Cnut at his desire.

I have judged it best to print these closing chapters without any addition of reference or notes, save the few which I have been able to draw up from his own papers. Those who have read the *Making of England* will understand that Mr. Green was accustomed to base his views on wide and full reading, and I have been unwilling

to risk any system of notes which must inevitably have seemed to rest his conclusions on a foundation narrower than that of his own thought and reading. I have felt the less difficulty in adopting this course owing to the elaborate system of references for this period which Mr. Freeman has supplied to students.

I have been specially careful throughout the book to preserve the exact words of the writer, even in dealing with the unfinished manuscript notes. The exceptions to this rule are the two paragraphs that open chapter ii., which I myself added at his own request, and the greater part of the paragraph on the custom of the feud at vol. i. p. 308, which was left unfinished, and which I briefly concluded. The materials for the reign of Cnut were very imperfect, and occasionally, as in vol. ii. pp. 181-186, and again at the close of the chapter, I have been forced to make some expansions and alterations so as to form a consecutive and intelligible narrative. The character of Godwine in vol. ii. pp. 264-266 I have drawn up from some rough pencilled jottings on the margin of a paper, using the exact words I found, but shaping them into continuous sentences and a general order. The few notes which I have added throughout the book are all marked as my own.

Two of the maps included in this work, "England at the Peace of Wedmore," and "England under the Ealdormen," are taken from rough unrevised plans made by Mr. Green; for the rest of the maps I am myself responsible.

I cannot close without a very earnest expression of sincere gratitude to the friends who out of their generous affection for his memory have helped me in my task with constant and ready sympathy; I have especially to thank Professor Stubbs for the kindness with which he has read through my work, and given me the advantage of his counsel.

ALICE STOPFORD GREEN.

14 KENSINGTON SQUARE,
November, 1883.

P.S.—I may perhaps add that, with a view to future editions, it had been Mr. Green's intention to ask in the preface to this work for suggestions from those who may have any local knowledge which might help to throw light on any points either in this book, or in the *Making of England*. I should be glad, so far as lay in my power, to carry out his wishes in this matter.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

THE ENGLAND OF ECGBERHT

	PAGE
Political and social changes which followed the settlement of the English in Britain	1
The gradual union of the conquering and the conquered races	3
The purely English form given to the new society	4
The gradual advance of cultivation	5
Illustrated in the condition of Dorset	5
The changes brought about by the introduction of Christianity	8
Its long strife with the older religions	10
Its bringing in of a new social class	13
And of a parochial organization	14
Results of this new ecclesiastical system on the old organization of English life	16
Influence of Christianity in the growth of pilgrimages	18
The pilgrims' route	19
The popularity of pilgrimages	20
Influence of Christianity on law	22
Character of the first written codes of law	22
Influence of Christianity on early English jurisprudence	24
Early development of the conception of public justice	26
Origin of the judicial character of folk-moot and hundred-moot	27

PAGE

The extent of the jurisdiction of the "folk" . . 27
The limitations introduced in the right of private vengeance 30
The difficulties in enforcing the "folks' justice" . 31
Causes which led to the development of the "justice of the king" 33
The king and his court 34
The king's progresses 36
Their influence on public justice 37
The results of the consolidation of Britain into the Three Kingdoms—
In the growing importance of the king . 37
In the decline of the ætheling . . . 39
In the elevation of the thegn . . . 40
In the loss of power of the folk-moot . . 40
In the change of character of the Witenagemot 41
Causes which led to the overthrow of the balance of power among the Three Kingdoms . . . 43

A.D.
758-793 Internal condition of Northumbria . 45
Its religious and intellectual life . . 46
793-806 Invasion of the northmen and its results . . 48
The apparent strength of Mercia . . . 49
Its real weakness 50
The superiority of Wessex derived from the character of the country 51
From the varied composition of the kingdom . . 51
From its administrative order 52
The character of Ecgberht's supremacy . . . 54

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF THE WIKINGS

829–858

787. The first coming of the pirates 56
793, 794 Their raids on Northumbria 57
The significance of their attack 58

PAGE
Growth of the Scandinavian peoples 59
Conditions of their life 61
Character of their country 62
Their early customs and religion 64
The Wikings 65
Their mode of warfare 66
The causes of their wanderings 67
The two lines of their attack on Europe . . . 68
Settlement of the northmen in South Jutland . . 70
Their attack on the Franks 71
The death of Godfrid and civil war in South Jutland 72
Descent of the northmen on the Isle of Sheppey . 73
Their descent on Ireland 74
Thorgils' settlement in Ireland 75
Its effect in arousing the West-Welsh to arms . . 75
Effect of the pirate attacks in arresting the consolidation of England 77
The political relations of Wessex and Kent . . 78
The military resources of Wessex 78
Relation of the Church to the Frankish kings . . 79
Peculiar position of the English bishops . . . 80
National character of the Church 81
Effect upon the Church of the pirate invasion . . 82
Its alliance with the West-Saxon kings . . . 82
Death of Ecgberht and accession of Æthelwulf . . 82
Extension of the Wiking settlement in Ireland . 83
The Wikings attack Wessex 83
Death of Thorgils 85
The pirates leave Wessex to attack Frankland . . 86
Importance of Kent 87
Pirate-raids on East-Anglia and Kent . . . 87
Æthelwulf's victory at Aclea 88
Pirate settlement in the Isle of Sheppey . . . 89
Æthelwulf's foreign policy 90
Æthelwulf's conquest of the North-Welsh . . . 91
Æthelwulf's pilgrimage to Rome 91
The Franks under Charles the Bald 92

A.D.		PAGE
856.	Æthelwulf's visit to Charles the Bald, and his marriage with Judith	92
856.	Wessex rises against Æthelwulf	93
857.	Æthelwulf retires to Kent and is succeeded in Wessex by Æthelbald	94

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF THE DANELAW

858–878

858.	Death of Æthelwulf	95
860.	Æthelbald dies and is succeeded by Æthelberht	95
866	Death of Æthelberht and accession of Athelred	96
	Extent of the Scandinavian conquests	96
	The importance of Britain to the pirates	97
	First appearance of the Danes	98
	Their mode of warfare	99
866	Attack of the Danes on East-Anglia under Ivar the Boneless	101
867	Their attack on Northumbria and conquest of York	102
	Ruin of the religious houses	103
	Position of the Primate of York	104
868	Æthelred drives the Danes back from Mercia	106
869.	The Danish conquest of East-Anglia under Ivar and Hubba	107
870	Martyrdom of Eadmund of East-Anglia	107
	Mercia pays tribute to the Danes	108
	The danger of Wessex	108
871	The Danish attack on Wessex	109
849	The birth of Ælfred	110
	His childhood	111
	His position as Secundarius	112
	Political significance of his marriage	113
871.	Danish victory at Reading and encampment on Ashdown	114
	Importance of this position	114

		PAGE
A.D.	Æthelred's victory at Ashdown	115
871.	Ælfred becomes king	116
871.	Ælfred buys peace from the Danes	117
874.	The Danish conquest of Mercia	118
875.	Halfdene conquers Bernicia and ravages Cumbria and Strathclyde	119
876.	The pirates gather their forces for a final attack on Wessex	119
876.	Guthrum's attack on the southern coast	120
877.	Ælfred recovers Exeter from the Danes	121
878.	The Danes overrun Wessex	122
	Ælfred falls back behind Selwood	122
	His refuge in Athelney	123
878.	Ælfred's victory at Edington	124
878.	The peace of Wedmore	124
	Its political consequences	125
	Its effect on the European struggle with the pirates	127
	The importance of the Danish settlement in Britain	128
68-876.	The Danish settlement in Northumbria	129
	Traces in Yorkshire of this settlement	130
	The northern trade	132
	Traces of their settlement in York	133
	Their political organization and the Trithings	134
877.	The Danish settlement in Mid-Britain	135
	The political organization in Mid-Britain	137
	The distribution of settlers	137
880.	The Danish settlement in East-Anglia	138
	The character of Guthrum's kingdom	139
	Its English institutions, and adoption of Christianity by the Danes	140
	Relations of the Danelaw with the Scandinavian realms	141
	Relation of the Danelaw to Wessex	144
	Real significance of the Danish settlement	144

CHAPTER IV

ÆLFRED

878–901

		PAGE
	Results of the want of political organization in the Danelaw	146
A.D.	Danger of Ælfred's position	147
878-884.	Years of peace	147
	Material and moral disorganization in Wessex	148
	Military disorganization and weakness of the fyrd	149
	Extinction of the free ceorls and growth of the thegns brought about by the war	152
	Ælfred's employment of the thegns for military service	152
	Ælfred's re-construction of the military system	153
897.	His creation of a navy	154
	The reorganization of public justice	156
	The new relation of the king to justice	157
	Importance of English Mercia	159
	Effect of the Danish wars on the kingly houses of Britain	160
	Ælfred becomes king of the Mercians	161
	Ælfred's work in introducing a common law among the English peoples	163
878-884.	The descents of the Danes on Frankland	165
884.	Renewal of the Danish attack on England	166
884.	The rising of East-Anglia	167
	London under the Danes of East-Anglia	167
886.	Ælfred recovers London from Guthrum	168
886.	Frith between Ælfred and Guthrum	169
	The division of Essex	169
	Importance of the recovery of the Thames valley and of London	170
	Upgrowth of a new national sentiment	171
	The intellectual ruin brought about by the Danish wars	172

		PAGE
	Importance of Wessex for the preservation of English civilization	174
	Ælfred's restoration of learning	175
	He draws men of learning to his court	176
	Ælfred's work in the formation of English literature	179
	English the first prose literature of the modern world	180
	Ælfred's translations	181
A.D.	The Bishop's Roll of Winchester	183
c. 887.	Ælfred's work on the Chronicle	185
	The historical importance of the Chronicle	186
890.	Death of Guthrum	187
	Growth of the Scandinavian kingdoms	188
893.	Harald Fair-hair	188
	Impulse given to the pirate-raids	189
893.	Renewal of the Danish attack on southern Britain	189
894.	Hasting ravages Wessex	190
898.	The rising of the Danelaw	191
	Alliance of the Danes and the Welsh	192
	Hasting's occupation of Chester	192
896, 897	Defeat of the Danes and ending of the war	193
	Ælfred's life	193
	His love of strangers	195
	Foundation of Athelney	196
	Othere and Wulfstan	198
	The organization of Ælfred's court	200
	The royal revenue	201
	Ælfred's connexion with the Continent	203
	His relations with the Welsh	204
	His relations with Bernicia and the Scots	205
	Growth of the Scot kingdom	205
901.	Death of Ælfred	207
	Character of Ælfred	207

CHAPTER V

THE HOUSE OF ÆLFRED

901–937

A.D.		PAGE
901.	Eadward the Elder	210
	Peace with the Danes	212
901.	Eadward takes the title of "King of the Anglo-Saxons"	213
	The weakness of English Mercia	214
907.	Eadward fortifies Chester	215
910.	Outbreak of war with the Danes	216
911.	Eadward's kingdom threatened from the north and from the south	217
912.	Eadward's annexation of the Thames valley	218
	Opening of war with East-Anglia	220
	Eadward's conquest of southern Essex	220
	Æthelflæd seizes the line of the Watling Street	221
	The Watling Street	222
913.	Æthelflæd's advance on the Upper Trent	224
	Æthelflæd secures the line of the Avon	225
918, 919.	Eadward's advance on the Ouse	226
921.	He conquers Northampton	227
921, 922.	He completes the conquest of East-Anglia, Essex, and the Fens	229
917, 918.	Æthelflæd attacks the Five Boroughs	229
922.	Death of Æthelflæd	230
922.	Eadward completes the conquest of Mid-Britain	231
	Mercia made part of the West-Saxon kingdom	232
	Political results of the conquest of the Danelaw	233
	The growth of commendation	233
	Growth of the new territorial character of the kingship	234
	Importance of the oath of allegiance	236
	Danger of Eadward's position	237
	His fortification of the north-west frontier	238

		PAGE
	Relation of Wessex to Bernicia and the kingdom of the Scots	239
924	The northern league against Eadward	240
924.	Submission of the north to Eadward	241
925.	Æthelstan becomes king	242
	His policy	243
925	Submission of the northern league to Æthelstan	244
	Submission of the Welsh	245
926	Æthelstan becomes King of Northumbria	246
	Fusion of Danes and Englishmen	247
	Character of Æthelstan's Witenagemots	248
	The work of the Witenagemots for public order	250
	The regulation of trade and of coinage	252
	The origin of frith-gilds	254
	Use of the word "shire"	256
	West-Saxon origin of the shire	257
	The early extension of the shire-system in Wessex	259
	The extension of the shire over Mercia	260
	The extension of the shire over the Danelaw	262
	The position of the shire-reeve	264
	Importance of his financial work	265
	Growth of his authority	266
	The imperial claims of Æthelstan	267
	The real weakness of his empire	268
	Danger from the northmen of Ireland	269
	Danger from the northmen of Gaul	269
912.	Hrolf's settlement in Gaul	270
	The results of this settlement on France and on England	271
	Relations of the Danelaw and Normandy	273
	The growth of the Norman duchy	275
	The effect on the foreign policy of the English kings	276
926-930.	Æthelstan's alliances with foreign powers	277
929.	The dangers which threatened William Longsword	278
933.	His successful alliance with the House of Paris	279
934.	Results of his policy seen in the renewal of the northern league against Æthelstan	280
	The significance of the league	281
937.	The battle of Brunanburh	282

CHAPTER VI

WESSEX AND THE DANELAW

937–955

		PAGE
	Political consequences of the battle of Brunanburh	284
	Restoration of the Northumbrian under-kingship	285
	The weakness of the monarchy	286
	Political reorganization of Britain	287
	Position of the ealdormen	288
	The ealdormanries of East-Anglia and Essex	289
	Eric Blood-axe	291
A.D.	Æthelstan sets Eric as king in Northumbria	292
936.	Æthelstan continues his former policy with regard to Normandy	294
936.	Lewis From-over-sea king of the West-Franks	294
	The support given to him by Æthelstan	295
	The difficulties of Lewis and failure of Æthelstan's political schemes	296
940.	Death of Æthelstan and accession of Eadmund	298
	Eadmund's policy	299
941.	The revolt of the Danelaw	300
	The position of Wulfstan of York	300
943.	The revival of the English Danelaw	302
	Growth of the Norman power	302
944.	Invasion of Normandy by Lewis	303
944.	Reduction of the Danelaw by Eadmund	304
	Political relations of Eadmund with the north	304
	Cumbria under the Northumbrian and West-Saxon kings	305
	Norwegian settlements in Cumbria	306
945.	The grant of Cumbria to the Scottish kings	307
	Eadmund's reform of the custom of the feud	309
945.	Normandy freed from the West-Franks	310
946.	Death of Eadmund	311

A.D.		PAGE
	The childhood and youth of Dunstan	312
c. 940.	He becomes a monk	314
fore 946.	He is made Abbot of Glastonbury	316
946.	Eadred becomes king	317
	Dunstan becomes counsellor to Eadred	317
	Significance of Eadred's coronation	318
947.	Submission of the north to Eadred	319
947, 948.	The rising of Northumbria under Eric Hiring	320
948.	Eadred ravages Northumbria and Eric is driven out	322
949-952.	Olaf, Sihtric's son, rules in Northumbria	323
954.	Final submission of the Danelaw	324
954.	Northumbria made into an earldom	324
	Dunstan's school at Glastonbury	325
955.	Æthelwold's school at Abingdon	327
	Their influence on English literature	329
	Eadred claims imperial supremacy over the whole of Britain	330
955.	Eadred's death	331

PORTRAIT

Engraved by G. J. STODART, *from a chalk drawing by* F. SANDYS

LIST OF MAPS

NO.			
1.	Britain and the Three Kingdoms under Ecgbert	*To face page*	1
2.	Lines of Northern Invasions	*page*	69
3.	Lines of Northern Invasions	*To face page*	96
4.	Britain north of the Wash	,, ,,	103
5.	East Britain	,, ,,	107
6.	South Britain	,, ,,	109
7.	South-West Britain	,, ,,	120
8.	Britain after the Treaty of Wedmore	*page*	126
9.	Northern Europe	*To face page*	164
10.	Britain after the Treaty of 886	,, ,,	169
11.	West Britain	,, ,,	191
12.	The Campaigns of Eadward and Æthelflæd	*page*	219
13.	Early English Settlements	*To face page*	262
14.	Northern Europe	,, ,,	269
15.	Normandy	,, ,,	275
16.	British Islands in 937	,, ,,	280
17.	England under the Ealdormen	,, ,,	289

THE CONQUEST OF ENGLAND

CHAPTER I

THE ENGLAND OF ECGBERHT

Social changes in Britain.

FEW periods of our history seem drearier and more unprofitable to one who follows the mere course of political events than the two hundred years which close with the submission of the English states to Ecgberht.[1] The petty and ineffectual strife of the Three Kingdoms, Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex, presents few features of human interest, while we are without the means of explaining the sudden revolutions which raise and depress their power, or their final subsidence into isolation and inaction. It is only when we view it from within that we see the importance of the time. It was in fact an age of revolution, an age in which mighty changes were passing over every phase of the life of Englishmen; an age in which heathendom was passing into Christianity,

[1] See "Making of England," chap. viii. (A. S. G.)

Chap. I.

The England of Ecgberht.

the tribal king into the national ruler, the ætheling into the thegn; an age in which English society saw the beginnings of the change which transformed the noble into a lord, and the free ceorl into a dependent or a serf; an age in which new moral conceptions told on the fabric of our early jurisprudence and in which custom began to harden into written law. Without, the new England again became a member of the European commonwealth, while within, the very springs of national life were touched by the mingling of new blood with the blood of the nation itself.

Character of its population.

The ethnological character of the country had in fact changed since the close of the age of conquest. The area of the ground subject to English rule was far greater than in the days of Ceawlin or Æthelfrith, but in the character of its population the portion added was very different from the earlier area; for while the Britons had been wholly driven off from the eastern half of the island, in the western part they remained as subjects of the conquerors. It was thus that in Ecgberht's day Britain had come to consist of three long belts of country, two of which stretched side by side from the utmost north to the utmost south, and the population of each of which was absolutely diverse. Between the eastern coast and a line which we may draw along the Selkirk and Yorkshire moorlands to the Cotswolds and Selwood, lay a people of wholly English blood. Westward again of the

Tamar, of the western hills of Herefordshire, and of Offa's Dyke, lay a people whose blood was wholly Celtic. Between them, from the Lune to the coast of Dorset and Devon, ran the lands of the Wealhcyn, of folks, that is, in whose veins British and English blood were already blending together and presaging in their mingling a wider blending of these elements in the nation as a whole.

The mixture of race.

The winning of Western Britain opened in fact a way to that addition of outer elements to the pure English stock which has gone on from that day to this without a break. Celt and Gael, Welshman and Irishman, Frisian and Flamand, French Huguenot and German Palatine, have come successively in, with a hundred smaller streams of foreign blood. The intermingling of races has nowhere been less hindered by national antipathy; and even the hindrances interposed by law, such as Offa's prohibition of marriage between English and Welsh, or Edward III.'s prohibition of marriage between English and Irish, have met with the same disregard. The result is that so far as blood goes few nations are of an origin more mixed than the present English nation; for there is no living Englishman who can say with certainty that the blood of any of the races we have named does not mingle in his veins. As regards the political or social structure of the people, indeed, this intermingling of blood has had little or no

CHAP. I. The England of Ecgberht.

result. They remain purely English and Teutonic. The firm English groundwork which had been laid by the character of the early conquest has never been disturbed. Gathered gradually in, tribe by tribe, fugitive by fugitive, these outer elements were quietly absorbed into a people whose social and political form was already fixed. But though it would be hard to distinguish the changes wrought by the mixture of race from the changes wrought by the lapse of time and the different circumstances which surround each generation, there can be no doubt that it has brought with it moral results in modifying the character of the nation. It is not without significance that the highest type of the race, the one Englishman who has combined in their largest measure the mobility and fancy of the Celt with the depth and energy of the Teutonic temper, was born on the old Welsh and English borderland, in the forest of Arden.

Character of the country.

Side by side with this change in the character of its population had gone on a change in the character of the country itself. Its outer appearance indeed still remained much the same as in earlier days. Not half its soil had as yet been brought under tillage; as the traveller passed along its roads, vast reaches of forest, of moor, of fen, formed the main landscape before him; even the open and tilled districts were broken everywhere by woods and thickets which the farmer

needed for his homestead, for his fences, for his house-building, and his fire. But limited as was its cultivation Britain was no longer the mere sheet of woodland and waste which the English had found it. Population had increased,[1] and four hundred years of labour had done their work in widening the clearings and thinning the woods. We have already caught glimpses of such a work in the moorlands of the north, in the fens of the Wash, in the thickets of Arden, as the monk carried his axe into the forest, or the thegn planted tillers over the grants that had been carved for him out of the waste "folk-land." The study of such a tract as the Andredsweald would show the same ceaseless struggle with nature—Sussex-men and Surrey-men mounting over the South-downs and the North-downs to hew their way forward to the future meeting of their shire-bounds in the heart of the Weald, while the vast herds of swine that formed the advance guard of the Cantwara who were cleaving their way westward along the Medway, pushed into the "dens" or glades in the woodland beyond.

Dorset.

We can see the general results of this industrial warfare in a single district, such as Dorset. When the English landed in Britain no tract was wilder or less civilized; its dense forest-reaches in fact checked the westward advance of the conquerors,

[1] Lingard ("Ang.-Sax. Church," i. 185) infers this from the new upgrowth of churches.

Chap. I. The England of Ecgberht.

and forced them to make their way slowly along the coast from the Stour to the Exe. Even when the Dorsætan were fairly settled there, the names of their hundreds and of the trysting places of their courts show the wild state of the land. The hundred-moots gather at barrow or den, at burn or ford, in comb or vale, in glade or woodland, here beside some huge boulder or stone, there on the line of a primæval foss-dyke, or beneath some mighty and sacred tree.[1] But even its hundred names show how soon the winning of the land began. Dorchester tells of the new life growing up on the Roman ruins, Knolton and Gillingham of the new "tons" and "hams" which rose about the settlements of the conquerors; while Beaminster, Yetminster, and Christchurch recall the work of the new Christendom that settled at last on the soil. Nowhere indeed was the industrial work of the Church more energetic; we have seen how Ealdhelm planted centres of agriculture as well as of religion at Sherborne and Wareham, and if more than a third of the shire belonged in later days to the clergy, it was in the main because monk and priest had been foremost in the reclama-

[1] For barrow-trysts, cf. Albretesberga (afterwards Cranbourne), Badbury, Modbury, Langeberga, Chalbury, Hunesberga; for "duns," Canendon (Wimbourne), Faringdon, Glochresdon; for boulders, Stane (Cerne Abbas), Golderonestone, some monolith by Burton Bradstock; for trees, Cuferdstroue, a tree on Culliford Barrow in Whitcomb parish; for foss, Concresdic or Combsditch; for glade, comb, burn, ford, wood, Cocden, Uggescomb, Sherborne, Tollerford, Ayleswood.

tion of the land.[1] Much indeed remained to be done. As late as the eve of the Norman conquest, but thirty or forty thousand inhabitants were scattered over the soil;[2] the king's forest-rights stretched over wild and waste throughout half the county, and even in the parts that had been won for culture, scrub and brushwood broke the less fruitful ground, while relics of the vanished woodland lingered in the copses beside every homestead, the "pannage woods" of beech and oak, and the "barren woods" of other timber that gave no mast to the swineherd.

Its industrial life.

But in spite of all, the work of civilization had begun. Little boroughs that, small as they were, already formed centres of social and industrial life were rising beside the harbours of the coast or clustering under the shelter of the great abbeys. Even where the bulk of the land lay waste, pastures stretched along the lower slopes of the moorland, whose herbage, though too rough and broken for the scythe, gave fair grazing ground to the herds of the township, while by stream and river ran the meadow-lands of homestead after homestead, clear of scrub and thicket, girt in by ditch and fence. About the homestead stretched the broad acres of the corn-land, with gangs of eight

[1] At the Conquest, the Bishop was the largest proprietor in the whole shire; he held in fact a tenth of it, while twice as much was held by religious houses at Shaftesbury, Cerne, Milton, and Abbotsbury.—Eyton, "Dorset Domesday," 156.

[2] Eyton, "Dorset Domesday," 152.

CHAP. I.

The England of Ecgberht.

oxen, each dragging its plough through the furrows. All the features of English life, in fact, all its characteristic figures were already there. We see mills grinding along the burns, the hammer rings in the village smithy, the thegn's hall rises out of its demesne, the parish priest is at his mass-book in the little church that forms the centre of every township, reeves are gathering their lord's dues, forester and verderer wake the silent woodland with hound and horn, the moot gathers for order and law beneath the sacred oak or by the grey stone on the moor, along the shore the well-to-do salt-men are busy with their salt-pans, and the fishers are washing their nets in the little coast hamlets, and setting apart the due of fish for their lords.[1]

Influence of Christianity.

Side by side, however, with this industrial change in the temper and aspect of the country was going on a far more profound change in its moral life. We have already noted the more striking and picturesque sides of the revolution which had been wrought in the displacement of

[1] No manor was complete without its mill, and Domesday gives 272 mills in Dorset, some simply winter-mills, some on streamlets that have now wholly vanished. Most of the smiths lived in the country towns. Though salt was already dug from the Cheshire mines, the want of communication forced each district to supply itself as it could, and we find in Domesday between seventy and eighty salt-men along the Dorset coast, seemingly villeins, but paying such large rent as to prove their trade a profitable one. Fishers too were found along the coast, villeins like the salt-men, and like them paying dues to their lords.—Eyton, "Dorset Domesday," pp. 50, 51.

the old faith and the adoption of the new, the planting of a Church on the soil with its ecclesiastical organization, its bishops, its priests, its court, and its councils, its language, its law, above all the new impulse given to political consolidation by the building up of Britain into a single religious communion. But these results of the new faith were small and unimportant beside the revolution which was wrought by it in individual life. From the cradle to the grave it had forced on the Englishman a new law of conduct, new habits, new conceptions of life and society. It entered above all into that sphere within which the individual will of the freeman had been till now supreme, the sphere of the home; it curtailed his powers over child and wife and slave; it forbade infanticide, the putting away of wives, or cruelty to the serf. It challenged almost every social conception; it denied to the king his heritage of the blood of the gods; it proclaimed slavery an evil, war an evil, manual labour a virtue. It met the feud face to face by denouncing revenge. It held up gluttony and drunkenness, the very essence of the old English "feast," as sins. It claimed to control every circumstance of life. It interfered with labour-customs by prohibitions of toil on Sundays and holy days. It forced on a rude community to which bodily joys were dear, long and painful fasts. Even profounder modifications were brought about by the changes

CHAP. I. The England of Egbert.

it wrought in the personal history of every Englishman. Ceremonialism hung round every one in those old days from the cradle to the grave, and by the contact with Christendom the whole character of English ceremonialism was altered. The very babe felt the change. Baptism succeeded the "dragging through the earth" for Hertha. A new kin was created for child and parents in the "gossip" of the christening. The next great act of life, marriage, remained an act done before and with assent of the fellow-villagers; but new bonds of affinity limited a man's choice; and while the old hand-plighting and wed survived the priest's blessing was added. The burial-rite was as completely altered. The burial-fire was abolished; and instead of resting beneath his mound, like Beowulf, on some wind-swept headland or hill, the Christian warrior slept with his fellows in his lowly grave beneath the shade of the village church.

Its strife with Heathenism.

But if the old faith was beaten by the new it was long in being killed. A hundred years after the conversion of Kent, King Wihtræd had still to forbid Kentish-men "offering to devils."[1] At the very close of the eighth century synods in Mercia and Northumbria were struggling against the heathen practice of eating horse-flesh[2] at the

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 41.

[2] Confess. Ecgberti, Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," ii. 163. Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," iii. 459.

feast to Woden. In spite of this resistance however, Wodenism was so completely vanquished that even the coming of the Danes failed to revive it. The Christian priest had no longer to struggle against the worship of Thunder or of Frigga. But the far older nature-worship, the rude fetichism which dated back to ages long before history, had tougher and deeper roots. The new religion could turn the nature-deities of this primæval superstition into devils, its spells into magic, its spae-wives into witches, but it could never banish them from the imagination of men; it had in the end even to capitulate to the nature-worship, to adopt its stones and its wells, to turn its spells into exorcisms and benedictions, its charms into prayers. How persistent was the strength of the older belief we see even at a later time than we have reached. "If witches or diviners," says Eadward, "perjurers or morth-workers, or foul, defiled, notorious adulteresses be found anywhere within the land, let them be driven from the country and the people cleansed, or let them wholly perish within the country."[1] Æthelstan, Eadmund, and Æthelred,[2] are as vigorous in their enactments; and the Church Councils were fierce in their denunciations of these lower superstitions. "We earnestly forbid all heathendom," says a canon of Cnut's day.

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 173.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 203, 247, 317.

"Heathendom is that men worship idols; that is, that they worship heathen gods, and the sun or the moon, fire or rivers, water-wells or stones, or great trees of any kind; or that they love witchcraft or promote 'morth-work' in any wise, or by 'blot' or by 'fyrht,' or do anything of like illusions."[1] "If witches or diviners, morth-workers or adulteresses, be anywhere found in the land, let them be diligently driven out of the country, or let them wholly perish in the country, save that they cease and amend."[2] The effort of the kings and the Church was far from limiting itself to words. In the tenth century we hear of the first instance of a death in England for heresy, in the actual drowning of a witch-wife at London Bridge.[3]

Survival of heathen customs.

But against many a heathen usage even Councils did not struggle. Easter-fires, May-day-fires, Midsummer-fires, with their numerous ceremonies, the rubbing the sacred flame,[4] the running through the glowing embers, the throwing flowers on the fire, the baking in it and distributing large loaves and cakes, with the round dance about it, remained village-customs. At Christmas the entry of the boar's head, decked with laurel and rosemary, recalled the sacrifice of the boar to Frigga at the Midwinter feast of the old heathendom. The

[1] Laws of Cnut. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 379.
[2] *Ibid.* [3] Cod. Dip. 591.
[4] Kemble, "Sax. in England," i. 360.

Autumn-Feast lingered on unchallenged in the village harvest-home with the sheaf, in old times a symbol of the god, nodding gay with flowers and ribbons on the last waggon. As the ploughman took to his plough he still chanted the prayer that, though christened as it were by the new faith, remained in substance a cry to the Earth-Goddess of the old, "Earth, Earth, Earth, Mother Earth, grant thee the Almighty One, grant thee the Lord, acres waxing, and sprouts wantoning . . . and the broad crops of barley, and the white wheat-crop, and all crops of earth." So as he drove the first furrow he sang again, "Hail, Mother Earth, thou feeder of folk, be thou growing by goodness of God, filled with fodder, the folk to feed."[1]

The clergy.

But if Christianity failed in winning a complete victory in this strife with the primæval religion which the tradition of ages had almost made a part of human thought and feeling, its outer victory over individual and social life was unquestioned. One of its momentous results was the intrusion into the social system of a new class, that of the clergy. The shorn head had its own social rights. Bishop, priest, lesser clerk, had each his legal "wer" as well as king, thegn, ceorl. The churchmen formed a distinct element in the state, an element to which in numbers, wealth, influence, jurisdiction, character, nothing analogous existed

[1] Cockayne, "Saxon Leechdoms, etc.," vol. i. pp. 402-405.

CHAP. I. The England of Egbert.

in the older English society; a class with its own organization, rule, laws, discipline, carefully defined by written documents in face of a world where all was yet vague, fluctuating, traditional. But this class had hardly taken its place in English society when influences from without and from within began to modify its relation to the general body of the state; and yet more radical modifications were brought about by the Danish wars. The very character of the Church was changed. English Christianity had in its earlier days been specially monastic. But the development of the country was fast changing the relation of monasticism to its religious needs. The earlier monasteries had been practically mission-stations—centres from which preachers went out to convert the country, and from which after its conversion priests were still sent about to conduct its worship. But as the country became Christian the place of these missionaries was taken by the parish priest. The influence of the unmonastic clergy, the seculars as they were termed, superseded that of the regulars. It was not by monasteries but by its parochial organization that the Church was henceforth to penetrate into the very heart of English society.

The Growth of the parish.

It was only by slow degrees that the parish, or kirkshire as it was then called, attained a settled form. The three classes of churches which we find noted in the laws mark so many stages in the religious annexation of the land. The minster,

or mother church, which levied dues over wide tracts[1] recalled the earlier days when the Church still had an exclusively monastic form, and its preachers went forth from monastic centres to evangelize the country. The next stage was represented by the manorial church, the establishment within this wide area by lord after lord of churches on their own estates[2] for the service of their dependants, the extent of whose spiritual jurisdiction was at first coincident with that of the estate itself. A third class of small churches without burial-grounds represented the growing demands of popular religion. From Bæda's letter to Archbishop Ecgberht we see that the establishment of manorial churches, that is, of what we commonly mean by a parochial system, was still far from complete, at least in Northumbria, in the middle of the eighth century; but in the half century that followed, it had probably extended itself fairly over the land. An attempt was also made to provide a settled livelihood for the parish priests in the "tithe" or payment of a tenth of the farm-produce by their parishioners;[3] but the obligation to pay this was still only imperfectly recognized, and the repeated injunctions of kings and synods

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 263, 265; Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 262.

[2] See Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 191, 263.

[3] "A tithe of young by Pentecost, and of earth-fruits by All Hallows mass," Laws of Æthelred. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 319. See Laws of Eadward and Guthrum, *ib.* p. 171.

Chap. I. The England of Ecgberht.

from Æthelstan downwards witness, by their repetition, to the general disobedience. It is probable that the priest as yet relied far more for his subsistence on his dues, on the "plough-alms" after Easter, the "church-shot" at Martinmas, and "light-shot" thrice in the year, as well as the "soul-shot" that was paid at the open grave.

The parish and the township.

Nothing is more remarkable in this extension of the ecclesiastical system than the changes wrought by it in the original unit of English social life. The stages by which the township passed into its modern form of the parish, and by which almost every trace of its civil life successively disappeared, are obscure and hard to follow, but the change began with the first entry of the Christian priest into the township.[1] The village church seems often to have been built on the very mound that had served till then for the gatherings of the tuns-folk. It is through this that we so often find in later days the tun-moot held in the churchyard or ground about the church, and the common practice even now of the farmers gathering for conference outside the church porch before morning service may preserve a memory of this freer open-air life of the moot before it became merged in the parish vestry. The church thus became the centre of village-life; it was at the church-door as in the moot, that "banns" were proclaimed, marriages or bargains made; even the "fair," or market, was

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 96, 104, 260.

held in the church-yard, and the village-feast, an institution no doubt of immemorial antiquity, was held on the day of the saint to which the church was dedicated; while the priest himself as its custodian, displaced more and more the tun-reeve or elder. It was he who preserved the weights and measures of the little community,[1] who headed the "beating" of its bounds, who administered its oaths and ordeals,[2] who led its four chosen men to hundred-moot or folk-moot, and sometimes even to the field. The revolution which was transforming the free township into the manor of a lord aided in giving the priest a public position. Though the lord's court came to absorb the bulk of the work of the older tun-moot, the regulation and apportionment of the land, the enforcement of by-laws, the business of its police, yet the tun-moot retained the little that grant or custom had not stripped from it; and it is thus that, in its election of village officers, of churchwarden and waywarden, as well as in its exercise of the right of taxation within the township for the support of church and poor, we are enabled to recognize in the parish vestry with the priest at its head the survival of the village-moot which had been the nucleus of our early life.[3]

Pilgrimages.

Without, the new faith brought England for the first time, as we have seen, into religious con-

[1] Lingard, "Anglo-Saxon Church," i. 171.
[2] *Ibid.* ii. 132 *et seq.*
[3] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 104.

tact with the western world through the mission-work of Boniface and his followers in Germany, and into political contact with it through the relations which this mission-work established with the Empire of the Franks. But a social contact of a far closer and more national kind was brought about by the growth of pilgrimages. At the time which we have reached, pilgrimages were among the leading features of English life. The spell which the mere name of Rome had thrown over Wilfrid and Benedict Biscop had only wrought the more widely as years went on. From churchman it passed to layman, and the enthusiasm reached its height when English kings laid down their crowns to become suppliants at the shrine of the apostles. Fresh from his slaughter of the Jutes in the Isle of Wight, the West-Saxon Ceadwalla "went to Rome, being desirous to obtain the peculiar honour of being washed in the font of baptism within the church of the blessed apostles, for he had learned that in baptism alone the entrance of heaven is opened to mankind, and he hoped that laying down his flesh as soon as he was baptized, he being cleansed, should immediately pass to the eternal joys of heaven. Both which things came to pass as he had conceived them in his mind. For coming to Rome," in 689, "he was baptized on the holy Saturday before Easter Day, and being still in his white garment he fell sick, was freed from the flesh," on the 20th of April,

"and was associated with the blessed in heaven."[1] Twenty years later a king of the Mercians and a king of the East Saxons quitted their thrones to take the tonsure at Rome,[2] and in 725 even Ine of Wessex gave up the strife with the anarchy about him, and made his way to die amidst the sacred memories of the holy city.

Their dangers.

The pilgrimages of the kings gave a new energy to the movement, and from this time the pilgrims' way was thronged by groups of English folk, "noble and ceorl, layman and clerk, men and women."[3] The dangers and hardships of the journey failed to deter them. The road which the pilgrims followed was mainly the same by which English travellers nowadays reach Italy; they landed at Quentavic near Boulogne, which was then the chief port of the northern coast of Gaul, and crossing the high grounds of Burgundy at Langres[4] journeyed along the Saone valley and Savoy to the passes of Mount Cenis. It was in these Alpine districts that the troubles of the pilgrims reached their height; for if an Archbishop of Canterbury could be frozen to death in traversing them[5] we may conjecture how severe must have been the sufferings of poorer travellers; but

[1] Bæd. H. E. lib. v. c. 7.
[2] *Ibid.* lib. v. c. 19.
[3] Bæd. H. E. lib. v. c. 7, "Quod his temporibus plures de gente Anglorum, nobiles, ignobiles, laici, clerici, viri et feminæ, certatim facere consuerunt."
[4] Bæda, "Lives of Abbots of Wearmouth," sec. 21.
[5] Will. Malm. "Gest. Pontiff." (Opera, ed. Migne, col. 1453).

CHAP. I.

The England of Egbert.

to the natural hardships of the journey was added the hostility of their fellow-men. To the robber lords of the mountain valleys pilgrims were a natural prey. It was in vain that Offa and Cnut alike sought protection for their subjects from Charles the Great and the Emperor Conrad. Imperial edicts told little on the greed of these hungry mountain wolves; an archbishop was plundered in Cnut's own day; and soon after the marauders were lucky enough to pillage three bishops as well.[1] It was in vain that the wayfarers gathered into companies for mutual protection;[2] for the country with its defiles and precipices was itself on the side of their assailants, and in the opening of the tenth century we hear of the surprise and slaughter of two bodies of English pilgrims in the mountains.

Their popularity.

But neither the dangers of the journey nor the fever that awaited them at its close checked the rush of pilgrims.[3] The increase in number indeed had been accompanied by a falling off in the character of the travellers. In some cases the exemption from port-dues which was granted to pilgrims seems to have been used as a cover for smuggling; while the custom of enforcing a visit

[1] Angl. Sacr. ii. 129.

[2] We find eighty Englishmen in the train of Abbot Ceolfrid of Wearmouth.—Bæda, "Lives of Abbots of Wearmouth," sec. 21.

[3] "Magna febris fatigatio advenas illic venientes visitare seu gravare solet."—Life of St. Winibald, ap. Canis. p. 126, quoted by Lingard, "Anglo-Saxon Church," ii. 127.

to the shrine of St. Peter as a penance for ecclesiastical crimes must have introduced a criminal element into the pilgrim companies. The association was the easier as the unshorn hair and beard which the law imposed on the "banished" man was also the customary mark of the pilgrim. Poverty too told hardly on the virtue of the women devotees; and Boniface, with a touch of priestly exaggeration, protests that by the middle of the eighth century Englishwomen of evil life could be found in every city in Lombardy.[1] But the religious impulse never ceased to supply worthier pilgrims than these; there was indeed so constant a stream of Englishmen traversing Rome from shrine to shrine, listening to its wild legends, gathering relics, books, gold-work, and embroidery, that it was necessary by Offa's day to found a distinct quarter of the town, called the "Saxon School," for their reception and shelter.

Written and unwritten law.

It would be hard to trace out the multifold forms in which the new religion impressed itself upon the social and political organization of the people whom it had won. We have already seen the influence which it exerted on the intellectual development of the country, but if the art of writing, as the missionaries introduced it, made a revolution in our literature, it made an even greater revolution in our law. Law, as all early tribes understood it, was simply the custom of

[1] Lett. Bonif. (ed. Giles), lxiii. p. 146; cf. xlix. p. 104.

each separate people as uttered from memory by its "law-man," under check of his assessors and of the gathered folk. Such utterances were looked on as changeless and divine. The authority of the past was in fact unquestioned; the people itself was conscious of no power to change the customs of its fathers; and it was only by an unconscious adaptation to the varying circumstances of each generation that this oral law was ceaselessly modified. But with the writing down of these customs the whole conception of law was changed. Not only was its sacred character, as well as the mystery which veiled its sources in the memory of the law-man, taken from it, but the mere writing them down fixed and hardened the customs themselves and took from them their power of adaptation and self-development; for change in the laws could henceforth only be wrought consciously, and on grounds of reason or necessity which questioned or set aside the authority they drew from the past.

Early English codes.

What caused this revolution to be so little felt was the slowness with which it was wrought. Great as was the fame of Æthelberht's code among scholars like Bæda, it was long before the rival states followed the example of Kent. There is nothing to warrant us in believing that written law reached Wessex before Ine, or Mercia before Offa, or that it ever reached Northumbria at all. The sphere, too, of the written code remained a

narrow and partial one; it restricted itself for the most part to such customs as were affected by the new moral conceptions which Christianity brought in and the new social order it created, or to the changes in police or in land-tenure which sprang from the natural advance of population and wealth.[1] Æthelberht's laws are little more than a record of the customary fines for penal offences, with a provision for the legal status of the new Christian priesthood,[2] and in the Kentish codes that follow, it is mainly on the ecclesiastical side that the area of legislation is widened.[3] Ine found himself forced by the advance of industry and by a new state of public order to deal largely with the subjects of agriculture and police,[4] while

[1] The earliest codes we possess are those of Kent, the laws of Æthelberht (ab. 600), those of Hlothere and Eadric (673-685), and those of Wihtræd (ab. 690). Ine's laws (676-705) are our only West-Saxon code. The Mercian code of Offa (755-794), though used by Ælfred in his compilation, is now lost.

[2] Out of ninety clauses, forty-one fix the fines for injury to various parts of the body. Almost all the laws refer to violent attacks on person or property: there is no mention of trade or agriculture. The Church is mentioned in the first provision alone.

[3] The Church is not mentioned in Hlothere and Eadric's laws, of whose sixteen provisions about half are fines for violence, the rest being for the most part regulations as to plaints in a suit, chapmen, and man-stealing; but those of Wihtræd are almost wholly ecclesiastical.

[4] A fourth of Ine's laws are concerned with agriculture in some way or other, such as the fencing of lands, protection of woods, cattle-stealing and maiming, trespass, firing of fences, etc. Few relate to acts of violence, but nearly a quarter of the whole code is concerned with theft, while the subject of trade comes for the first time prominently forward. Legal procedure again is largely treated. Under internal police we

The England of Ecgberht.

fresh provisions were needed to regulate the position of the Welsh who had submitted to his sword; but in other ways the bounds of his legislation are as narrow as those of the Kentish code, nor, so far as we can gather from Ælfred's compilation, were those of Offa any wider. To the last, indeed, the whole of our family law, with the bulk of our village and of our land law, remained purely oral.

Early English jurisprudence.

The new moral ideas which were generated alike by Christianity and by the settlement of the community itself in more peaceful and industrious form told with equal force on English jurisprudence. A glance at the early history of our national justice shows that its original groundwork was the right of feud. Older than "the peace of the folk," far older than "the king's peace," which was to succeed it, was the "frith" or peace of the freeman himself, the right that each man had to secure for himself safe life and sound limb. He lay, as the phrase ran then, "in his own hand."[1] It was his right to fight his foe, his

may place the provisions for determining the relations of a man with his lord, for regulating the quitting of lands, and the like. The laws against mutilation of cattle, no doubt records of early custom, are really directed against damage done to what was the general medium of exchange, for a mutilated beast was useless for purposes of barter.

[1] "Mund" or "hand" meant the protection conferred by any one and the peace consequent on it, and "mund-bryce," or hand-breach," was the violent breaking in on this peace and the sum paid as atonement for such a "breach of the peace."—"Essays in Anglo-Saxon Law" (Boston), p. 279.

right and even his duty personally to exact vengeance for wrong done to him; and his kinsmen were bound by their tie of blood to aid him alike in self-defence and in revenge. Traces of this older state of things, in which every freeman was his own absolute guardian and avenger, ran through the whole structure of our later jurisprudence and procedure. A man might slay one whom he found in his own house within closed doors with his wife, or daughter, or sister, or mother;[1] he might slay the thief whom he caught red-handed in the actual commission of his theft,[2] or the accused man who would not come in peacefully to make answer to the charge.[3] But as a general right, that of unregulated vengeance had long passed away before Saxon or Engle reached Britain. The conquerors came as "folks"; and the very existence of a folk implied a "folk-frith" of the community as a whole. Every man of the folk lay in "the folk's hand"; and, wrongdoer as he might be, it was only when the "hand" was opened, and its protection withdrawn, that the folk could suffer him to be

Even in later days we may note that before paying the "wite," or fine for the breach of the "folk-peace," a culprit has to pay the bôt, or atonement to the wronged man for the breach of his own peace.

[1] Ll. Ælfred, 4. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 91.

[2] Ll. Ine, 12, 16, 21, 28, 35. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 111-125.

[3] Ll. Eadw. and Guthr. 6. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 171.

maimed or slain.[1] The earliest conception therefore of public justice was a solemn waiver on the part of the community of its right and duty of protection in the case of one who had wronged his fellow member of the folk. Till such a waiver was given the wrongdoer remained in the folk's "mund"; and to act against him without such a waiver or without appeal to the folk was to act against the folk itself, for it was a breach of the peace or frith to which his "mund" entitled him. It was the demand for such a withdrawal of the public protection that constituted the trial, and the folk were the only judges of the demand. Thrice, and before good witness, had the summons to the folk-moot or court to be given by the accuser to the man he charged with the crime, and that at his own house, at the sunsetting, and seven days before the moot. Refusal thrice repeated on the part of the accused to hearken to the summons to make answer in the folk-moot, or to submit to its doom, was a contempt of the folk; but only after threefold refusal was the folk's "mund" withdrawn from him; till then the wronged man who sought his own vengeance for the wrong broke the folk-frith and became a wrongdoer in his turn.

[1] "It was a fundamental rule of German law that vengeance must be authorised by previous permission of the Court, or if it preceded the judgment, it must afterwards be justified before the tribunal."—"Essays in Angl. Sax. Law," p. 264.

It was thus that folk-moot and hundred-moot assumed a judicial character. Originally they were no courts of justice in the modern sense of the word; they did not decide on the truth or falsehood of the charge made, still less did they assign a punishment for wrong done. The wrong was still between man and man; its punishment, if punished it was, must be exacted by the wronged man or his kinsfolk from the wrong-doer by sheer fighting; but ere the fight could begin the leave of the folk at large had to be sought and given. The license ran in words long preserved in English law, "homini liceat pugnare," "you may fight."[1] But before such a license could be procured, it was needful that the folk should decide that the man had a right to fight; and the accused thus found himself fronted by the oath,[2] the solemn appeal to heaven. It may be that here again men looked on their fellow-men as being in the "mund," not only of the folk, but in a higher sense of the gods they served, and that, as the appearance of the accuser before the moot was a seeking for the discharge of the wrong-doer from the protection of the folk, so the oath was a seeking for his discharge from the protection of his heavenly lord and guardian. But whether such a conception, or more dim and vague

The feud and the folk.

[1] Ælfred, 42. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," p. 91.

[2] See the collection of oaths in Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," vol. i. 179-185.

Chap. I. The England of Ecgberht.

ideas of awe and dread, as of a vengeance of the gods on men who wronged them by falsehood, gave birth to the oath, it was the soul of the judicial process before the folk-moot. By a fore-oath the accuser stated his charge against the accused;[1] and if the accused met oath with oath the appeal was complete. With the truth or falsehood of the charge the folk had nothing to do: what it had to do was to judge whether the charge was of such a sort, and made in such a way, as to give the accuser fair ground for seeking amends from the accused. If such was its judgment, the folk withdrew its "mund," and suffered the two contending parties to wage their war.

The bounds of the feud.

But its jurisdiction was not yet exhausted. As a people interested in its own peace and order, the folk had still the right as it had the power to determine how this war should be waged. Even in the earliest days custom had thrown its bonds round the wild right of private war. It had forbidden all secret vengeance, such as poisoning, all mutilation or cold-blooded cruelty, all concealment of the deed. Though in vengeance or self-defence a man might slay his foe if he met him, yet "If a man slay another man in revenge or self-defence," ran a law which, late as the date of its embodiment in writing may be, is clearly a record of primæval usage, "let him take to himself none of the goods

[1] He might show, without oath, the wound with which he charged him, and this stood in place of the oath.

of the dead, neither his horse, nor helmet, nor shield, nor any money, but in wonted manner let him arrange the body of the dead man, his head to the west, his feet to the east, upon his shield, if he have it; and let him drive deep his lance, and hang there his arms, and to it rein in the dead man's steed; and let him go the nearest vill and declare his deed to the first man he meets, that he may make proof and have defence against the kindred and friends of the man he has slain."[1] The same web of custom threw itself round the wider warfare of the kin. As late as the days of Ælfred[2] we see the kindred of the slain man gathered, their quick secret ride over the country, the foe's house surrounded and besieged; but not for seven days, ran law or custom, must attack be made, for seven days the vengeance-seeker and his kinsfolk must watch the house, while the wrong-doer within takes counsel with them of his household whether to surrender or to fight. If within these days he chose to surrender, for thirty days more they lay about the house, while the wrong-doer sent about his friends and kinsmen to find men who would aid him in the atonement for his crime,[3] and it was not till these were gathered that taking one of his house as a spokesman he gave him pledge that he would make full atone-

[1] Hen. I. 83, sec. 6. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 591.
[2] Ll. Ælfred, 42. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 91.
[3] Ll. Eadmund, ii. 7. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 251.

ment, and with this pledge the spokesman came forth to the kindred of the slain. Again in their turn these gave pledge that the slayer might draw near in peace and himself give pledge for the "wer," or atonement for his crime. It was only when he stood before them and gave his free pledge for this payment, and strengthened it by giving security for its completion, that the feud was at an end.

Eadmund's reforms.

With all these bounds and limitations, however, the feud became more and more incompatible with the growing sense of humanity and public order. "Both I and all of us," said Eadmund in a proclamation to his people,[1] "hold in horror the unrighteous and manifold fightings that exist among ourselves." It jarred too with the conception of personal responsibility that Christianity had introduced, and which was deepening as the bonds of kinship grew weaker with the progress of society. Eadmund's law, indeed, struck a heavy blow at the very principle of kinship:—"If henceforth any man slay another, let him bear the feud himself (save that by the aid of his friends and within twelve months he make amends with the full wer), to be borne as he may. If his kinsmen forsake him and will not pay for him, it is my will that all the kindred be out of feud, save the actual doer of the deed, provided that they do not give him either food or protection. . . . Moreover,

[1] Ll. Eadmund. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 246.

if any of the other man's kinsmen take vengeance upon any man save the actual doer of the deed, let him be foe to the king and all his friends and forfeit all that he has."[1] It was only slowly that so great a change in custom and feeling as this law implies could be actually brought about, and the feud still remained, however hampered by reforms, the base of our criminal procedure; but its enactment shows that the change had begun, and that two conceptions from whose union our modern justice was to spring, the conception of personal responsibility for crime, and the conception of crime as committed primarily not against the individual but against the public peace, were from this time to exercise a deepening influence on national sentiment.

The "folk's justice."

In the reforms of Eadmund, however, we have passed long beyond the jurisprudence of the time of Ecgberht. At the opening of the ninth century English thought was still far from our modern conceptions of justice or law, from the conception of crime as committed primarily against the public peace, as cognizable only by public authority, and as corrected by public punishment. As yet, and for centuries to come, all that either king or community attempted to do was to bring the right of private vengeance and self-protection within definite and customary bounds, to subject it to the previous sanction and permission of the folk in the folk-moot, to provide means for averting it

[1] Ll. Eadmund. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 249.

where no good grounds existed for its exercise by solemn oath or ordeal of innocence on the part of the accused, or where such grounds really existed to provide and extend the sphere of a fixed and customary atonement in place of actual blood-shedding. Scant, however, as such a justice may seem to modern eyes, it would have been practically effective for the purposes of public order had any adequate machinery existed for imposing the will of the folk on accuser and accused. But the folk-moot had no direct means of enforcing its doom. If a man thrice refused, after due summons, to appear before it, or appeared but refused to bow to its decision, he put himself indeed by his very act out of the folk, and out of its protection; he became, in a word, an "outlaw," who might be hunted down like a wolf, and knocked on the head by any man who met him.[1] But beyond this general hostility the folk had no means of forcing such an offender to submit to its judgment. A yet weightier obstacle to efficient justice was often found in the course of procedure itself. Accuser and accused brought kinsmen and friends in their train to the folk-moot, whether to sway its doom or to enforce it, or to guard against vengeance without law. With such a crowd of adherents at the moot, it must always have been hard for meaner men to get justice against king's thegn or country thegn, and as the nobles rose to

[1] "Ess. in Ang-Sax. Law," 271, 275, 283.

a new height above the people, it was easy for them to hold hundred-moot and even folk-moot at bay. Kent was among the most civilized and orderly parts of England, but at an even later time than this we find the great men of Kent setting the doom of its folk-moot absolutely at defiance.[1]

The "king's justice."

It was this difficulty more than all else that must have led to the passing of the "folk's justice" into "the justice of the king." From the earliest days the king had been recognized not only as a political and military leader, but as a judge; and he was the one judge whose position gave him the power of enforcing his dooms, for by himself or by his ealdorman the whole military strength of the kingdom or shire could be called out to bring a culprit to submission. It was natural that as the local courts found themselves more and more helpless against the great lords they should appeal to a force before which the greatest lords must bow; and that the baffled Witan of Kent should pray Æthelstan that, "if any man be so rich or of so great kin that he cannot be punished or will not cease from his wrong-doing, you may settle how he may be carried away into some other part of your kingdom, be the case whose it may, whether of villein or thegn."[2] The extension, too, of thegnhood, and the growth of private jurisdictions

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 217.
[2] *Ibid.*

CHAP. I.

The England of Ecgberht.

or sokes, exempt from the common jurisdiction of the hundred-moot, gave a new scope to the justice of the king.[1] As such private jurisdictions grew more and more frequent, they not only weakened the older justice of the people, but forced on the royal court a large development of its judicial activity, if the justice of the lords was to be hindered from passing into a means of extortion and tyranny.

The king's court.

Such a development was made easy by the very character of the king's court. The English king was a great landowner, and like other great landowners he was driven from one "vill" to another for actual subsistence. He was in constant motion, for payments were made in kind, and it was only by moving from manor to manor that he could eat up his rents. A Northumbrian king had to consume his customary dues in one vill at the foot of the Cheviots and in another on the Don. A king of Wessex had no other means of gathering his rents from his demesne on the Exe or on the Thames. The king's court therefore was really a moving body, a little army eating its way from demesne to demesne, but with a home in our modern sense nowhere, encamping at one or another spot only for so long as the rent-in-kind sufficed, and then after a day or two rolling

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 214, etc. "It is probable that, except in a few special cases, the sac and soc thus granted were before the Conquest exemptions from the hundred courts only, and not from those of the shire."

onward. In the stories of the time[1] we see the king's forerunners pushing ahead of the train, arriving in haste at the spot destined for the next halt, broaching the beer-barrels, setting the board, slaying and cooking the kine, baking the bread; till the long company come pounding in through the muddy roads, horsemen and spearmen, thegn and noble, bishop and clerk, the string of sumpter horses, the big waggons with the royal hoard or the royal wardrobe, and at last the heavy standard borne before the king himself. Then follows the rough justice-court, the hasty council, the huge banquet, the fires dying down into the darkness of the night, till a fresh dawn wakes the forerunners to seek a fresh encampment.

The court on progress.

Such was in greater or less degree the life of every great noble, and such necessarily was that of the king. But with the growing consolidation of England into a single realm these movements took a more ceremonious and political form. Custom came to regulate the seeming disorder of the royal progress; each manor, each town, knows and makes its customary payments in kind, thegn and villein render their customary service, while the royal clerk reads from the custom-roll and ticks off the dues paid and the service done. "Watching the king," in fact, finding horses for

[1] See for Ine, Will. Malmesbury, "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), vol. i. p. 49; for Æthelstan, the Saxon Life of Dunstan (Memorials of Dunstan, pp. 17, 18).

CHAP. I. The England of Ecgberht.

his journey, or boats for his sail, guarding his person, supplying his larder, become the customary tenures by which towns hold their freedom. The progresses grow regular and methodical; men know when their king will be among them, they know where to bring their suit, their plea, their gift to him. As the king moves through forest and waste, his progress is a chase; he finds his foresters in waiting with the villeins bound to customary service in driving the deer. As he passes over the "king's highway," landlord and thegn are called to give account for broken road or broken bridge. In his rough justice-court there is the appeal to be heard, the false moneyer to be branded, the outlaw to be hanged at the nearest oak. The "king's peace" is about him as he goes; his "grith," the breach of which no fine can atone for,[1] spreads for a given space around his court: a double "bôt" and fine protects all who are on their way to him; if a brawler fight over his cups in the king's hall, he may die at the king's will.[2] The court itself is no longer the mere train of personal attendants which followed a provincial king; it is a little army that needs its officers to order and marshal it, its chamberlain to command the household to deck the rough halls with courtly hangings for the king's stay, to issue from the hoard the gold drinking-cups for the

[1] Æthelr. iii. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 293.
[2] Ine, sec. 6. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 107.

king's table, to pay and command the bodyguard; its staller to order its movements, to direct the horses, the sumpter mules, the long string of waggons, as well as to "park" the vast encampment for the night; its dish-thegn and cup-thegn to provide the beeves and bread, the wines and ale, for its daily consumption. The creation of these great officers of the household, some of whom we find already existing in Ælfred's time, was one of the most important results of the royal progresses. But a yet more important result was the impulse they gave to the change in our system of justice, for at a time when the public needs called for a judicial power which should be strong enough to enforce its doom upon noble and churl, and supreme alike over folk-moot and soke, the progresses of the king carried such a power into every corner of the realm.

Growth of the kingship.

The development however of English justice was but one of the influences that were telling throughout the period on the transformation of the English kingship. As England drew together into its Three Kingdoms the wider dominion of the king removed him further and further from his people, lifting him higher and higher above the nobles, and clothing him more and more with a mysterious dignity. Every reign raised the sovereign in the social scale. The bishop, once ranked equal with him in value of life, sank to the level of the ealdorman. The ealdorman him-

CHAP. I.

The England of Ecgberht.

self, in earlier days the hereditary ruler of a smaller state, became a mere delegate of the king. The king, if he was no longer sacred as the son of Woden, became yet more sacred as "the Lord's Anointed." By the very fact of his consecration he was pledged to a religious rule, to justice, mercy and good government; but his "hallowing" invested him also with a power drawn not from the will of man or the assent of his subjects but from the will of God. Treason against him thus became the worst of crimes, while personal service at his court was held not to degrade but to ennoble. The thegns of his household found themselves officers of state; and the development of politics, the wider extension of home and foreign affairs, gradually transformed these royal servants into a standing council of ministry for the transaction of the ordinary administrative business, and the reception of judicial appeals.

The æthel-ing and the thegn.

The rise of the royal power was furthered by the change which passed at this time over the character of the English noble. Not only was the character of this class profoundly affected by the consolidation of the smaller folks into larger realms, but its whole relation to the king was radically changed. The superiority of the æthel-ing over the ceorl was a traditional superiority which reached back to the very infancy of the race, and which consisted in an actual difference, as both believed, of blood and origin. The tribal

king was simply the noblest among the æthelings. But with the extinction of the smaller kingships, and the subjection of both classes to one of the greater monarchies, the position of the hereditary noble was changed. He was no longer of the same blood with the king; while the wider area of the state, and the number of æthelings it necessarily included within it, lowered his individual position and brought him nearer to the ceorl. At the same time he was being displaced from his older position by nobles of a new and distinct class. Service with the kings, as we have seen, begot the class of thegns; and while the hereditary noble dwindled with the growth of kingship, the noble by service necessarily rose with it. An æthelings of the Middle English inevitably grew less and less important as the Mercian kingdom widened its bounds from sea to sea, while a thegn of the Mercian court grew as inevitably greater. And to the greatness that came of his relation to a greater master the thegn added a corresponding superiority of wealth. The possessions of the village noble might lift him above his fellow villager, but they could not vie with the wide domains which the kings of the great states carved out of the folk-land for their thegns.[1] The æthelings thus died down into a social class, while the

[1] These grants had become so frequent, that even by Ine's time, though some gesiths remained landless, this was exceptional.—Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 181, note 3.

CHAP. I.

The England of Ecgberht.

thegns took their place as a political nobility dependent on the crown.

The Witenagemot.

A further development of the royal power sprang from the changes wrought in the older national institutions by the disappearance of the tribal kingships in the larger monarchies of the Three Kingdoms. The life of the earlier English state was gathered up in its folk-moot. There through its representatives, chosen in every hundred-moot, the folk expressed and exercised its own sovereignty in matters of justice, as of peace and war. But when the folk sank into a portion of a wider state, its folk-moot sank with it; if it still met, it was only to exercise one of its older functions, that of supreme justice-court, while political supremacy passed from it to the court of the far-off lord.[1] And as the folk-moot died down into the later shire-moot or county-court, the folk's influence on government came to an end. Folk-moots of Surrey-men or South Saxons could exercise no control over a king of Wessex. Folk-moots of Hwiccas or North Engle could bring no check to bear on a king of Mercia. Nor was the loss of this influence made up by the control of the nobler class. Beside the folk-moot, and acting with it, had stood the Witenagemot, the group of æthelings gathered to give rede to the king, and through him to propose a course of action to the folk. On these the growth of the monarchies did

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 140, 141.

not tell as directly as on the folk-moot. Nobles could still gather about the king; and while the folk-moot passes out of political notice, the Witenagemot is heard of more and more as a royal council. But if the name remained, the meeting itself became a wholly different one. The decline in the class of æthelings, their displacement by the thegn, would alone have altered its character. The distance of the king from the nobles' homes, as the lesser realms were gathered into the Three Kingdoms, altered it yet more. When a West-Saxon king called his Witan to Exeter he probably expected few thegns from Sussex or Kent. When he called them to Kent he can hardly have seen many from Cornwall or the Defn-sætan. From the opening of the age of consolidation, therefore, the Witenagemot naturally changed into a mere gathering of bishops and great ealdormen, as well as of the royal thegns in service at the court;[1] and it retained this form under the kings of a single England, with just such an increase of numbers as necessarily resulted from the welding of the three realms into one. The seventeen bishops of the English sees, about an equal number of ealdormen, whom we may again presume to be

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 146. The Witenagemot that gathered round such a king as Offa consisted only of the five bishops of the Mercian kingdom, of the five or six ealdormen who may have ruled over the older kingdoms or folks that were included within it, and of some ten or a dozen thegns who probably held high offices in the royal household.

CHAP. I. The England of Ecgberht.

actual rulers of the various folks and under-kingdoms, a few abbots, and some fifty or sixty nobles and thegns, comprised the list at its fullest. But the usual gatherings hardly exceed in number those of Offa's court; and even under later kings, such as Eadgar, the usual Witenagemots number some nine prelates, five ealdormen, and fifteen thegns.[1]

Its character.

Such a council might in many ways reflect the national temper, but it was in no sense a representative of the nation. On occasions of peculiar solemnity indeed, such as that of a coronation or the promulgation of a code of laws, the old theory of a folk-moot ratifying the decisions of the Witan and the king rose again into life, and the retinues in the train of noble and prelate represented by their shouts of "Aye, aye," the assent of the collective freemen. But such an assent was a mere survival of the past; in practice it was an empty form, and the occasions on which it was called for were rare and exceptional.[2] In ordinary times the Witenagemot was little more than a

[1] See for the whole of this subject, Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. cap. vi.

[2] The decisions of one of Æthelstan's Witenagemots are made in common with "totâ populi generalitate."—Cod. Dip. 364. But "that such gatherings shared in any way the constitutional powers of the Witan, that they were organized in any way corresponding to the machinery of the folk-moot, that they had any representative character in the modern sense as having full powers to act on behalf of constituents, that they shared the judicial work, or, except by applause and hooting, influenced the decisions of the chiefs, there is no evidence whatever."—Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 142.

royal council, whose members were named and summoned by the king,[1] and which widened now and then into aristocratic assemblies that foreshadowed the "Great Council" of the later Baronage.

The Three Kingdoms.

That the movement towards national consolidation should have stopped so long at the creation of the Three Kingdoms is one of the problems of our early history. But as the eighth century drew to its close, the internal conditions of these states and their relations to one another showed that the long-delayed revolution was near at hand. The most prominent cause of the break-up of the political system of the Three Kingdoms was one that had already told fatally on the lesser kingships. In the earlier life of the English peoples, political individuality found its centre and representative in their royal stocks; and the number of the separate folks was shown in the number of their kings. Kent and Sussex found room for at least two in each realm; East Anglia and Wessex seem at times to have had many; there were separate royal stocks for peoples like the Hecanas and Hwiccas, or the South-Mercians and Middle-Engle. It was only through the extinction or degradation of these kingly families that national union was possible; and it is as a main step in bringing this

[1] Æthelstan speaks of the Witan at his great meetings as "Witan whom the king himself has named."—Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 241.

CHAP. I. The England of Ecgberht.

about that the formation of the larger states during the seventh and eighth centuries is so important in our history. With the gradual extension of the Three Kingdoms the bulk of the smaller kingships disappeared.[1] Some kings lingered on for a time as under-kings; some sank into ealdormen, who drew their power from the appointment of the conquering over-lord; some, no doubt, perished altogether with the chances of time and of war.[2] But a new period began from the moment that the extinction of the royal stocks told on the Three Kingdoms themselves.

Northumbria.

Northumbria was no longer the formidable kingdom which we have seen carrying its arms to the Clyde in the days of Eadberht. The withdrawal of that king to a cloister had been the close of its greatness, for after a year's reign his son Oswulf was slain by the thegns of his household,[3] and with his death peace and order seem to have come utterly to an end. Oswulf was in fact the last undisputed representative of the royal line of Bernicia. The kingly house fell with him, and from this moment a strife for the

[1] Thus the Lindsey kings were extinct before 678, when their land was disputed between Mercia and Northumbria; nor do we hear of any Middle-English king after Peada. The stock of Deira ended with Oswini. The kings of Sussex are not heard of after its conquest by Ecgberht, nor those of Wight after its conquest by Ceadwalla.

[2] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 198, etc.

[3] "Occisus . . . à suâ familiâ," Sim. Durh. "Gest. Reg." a. 758.

crown absorbed the whole energy of Northumbria. The throne was seized by Æthelwold Moll;[1] and a victory over his opponents at the Eildon Hills near Melrose so strengthened his power that Offa, just settled in Mercia, gave him his daughter to wife. But after six years of rule Æthelwold Moll lost his kingdom in a fight at Winchanheale in 765;[2] and his place was taken by another claimant, Alchred.[3] The history of Northumbria became from this hour a mere strife between these rivals and their houses. Alchred, victorious over two risings under ealdormen,[4] was driven in 774 to take refuge among the Picts by Æthelred, the son of Æthelwold; but after four years of strife Æthelred followed his rival into exile; and his successor, Alfwold "the son of Oswulf" interrupts for nine years, from 779 to 788, the rule of the warring houses. Alfwold's reign however was as stormy as the rest. In one rising an ealdorman was "burnt" by two of his fellow-ealdormen; and in 788 another caldorman rose and slew the king.[5] With his slaying the two houses again came to the front; for two years Alchred's son, Osred, occupied the throne; and on his flight[6] in face of a revolt of his ealdormen, the son of Æthelwold Moll,

[1] Sim. Durh. "Gest. Reg." a. 759. [2] *Ibid.* 765.

[3] Alchred claimed descent from Ida through Bleacmann.—Flor. Worc. a. 765; but Simeon adds "ut quidam dicunt."—Gest. Reg. a. 765. Æthelwold's descent was even more doubtful: "of uncertain descent."

[4] Sim. Durh. "Gest. Reg." a. 774.

[5] *Ibid.* 788. [6] *Ibid.* 792.

CHAP. I.

The England of Ecgberht.

Alcuin.

Æthelred, was again recalled to the kingdom after eleven years of exile.

Æthelred shrank from no blood-shedding to secure his throne. The two children of his predecessor were drawn by false oaths from their sanctuary at York to be slain at his bidding,[1] and Osred, who was drawn by like pledges from Man, found a like doom. For a while this ruthlessness seems to have succeeded in producing some sort of peace, but the long anarchy of thirty years had left the land a mere chaos of bloodshed and misrule, and all that saved it from utter ruin was the wide extension of its ecclesiastical domains. The waste and bloodshed of its civil wars stopped short at the bounds of the vast possessions which had been granted to its churches; the privilege of sanctuary which they enjoyed gave shelter to the victims of the strife; and the learning and culture of Bæda and of Archbishop Ecgberht still found untroubled homes at Jarrow or York. Its intellectual life was thus able to go on amidst the wreck of its political life; and in the midst of the anarchy a scholar passed from the schools of Northumbria to become the literary centre of the west. Born about 735 within the walls of York, Alcuin had reached early manhood at the retirement of Eadberht from the throne.[2] He had

[1] Sim. Durh. "Gest. Reg." a. 792.

[2] For Alcuin, see article on him by Stubbs in "Dict. Christ. Biogr." vol. i. p. 73.

been entrusted, like other noble youths, to Archbishop Ecgberht in his boyhood; and was placed under the schoolmaster Æthelberht, who followed Ecgberht in his see on his death. In 766, when Alchred had just mounted the throne, he seems to have accompanied Æthelberht on a journey to Rome, and some time after his return himself took charge of the school of York. The years of his teaching there, from 767 to 780, were the age of its greatest fame and influence;[1] so strangely in fact was the Church isolated from the secular fortunes of the realm about it that amidst the growing anarchy of Northumbria not only scholars from every part of Britain, but even from Germany and Gaul, are said to have crowded to Alcuin's lecture-room, while his friend, Archbishop Æthelberht, was busy in building a new and more sumptuous church at York, as well as in journeys to Rome in which he could gather books for its library.

It was on his return from a journey to get the pallium for Æthelberht's successor in 781 that Alcuin, now the most famous of European scholars, met Charles the Great at Parma, and was drawn by him from his work in Britain to the wider work of spreading intellectual life among the Franks. But though his home was

[1] "Eo tempore in Eboraica civitate famosus merito scholam magister Alchuinus tenebat, undecumque ad se confluentibus de magna sua scientia communicans."—Vit. S. Liudgeri, quoted by Lingard, "Anglo-Saxon Church," vol. ii. p. 203.

CHAP. I. The England of Ecgberht.

now in a strange land, Alcuin's heart still clave to his own Northumbria. The news of its fresh disorder, and the slaying of Alfwold in 788, drew from him prayer after prayer to Charles for leave to revisit his country; and in 790, soon after the recall of Æthelred Moll to the throne, he seems to have returned to the north of Britain. If so, he must have witnessed the bloody deeds by which Æthelred strove to secure his crown; and we cannot wonder at his finding omens of ill in "that reign of blood which," as he wrote after his departure to the king, "we saw in Lent, at a time when the sky was calm and cloudless, fall from the lofty roof of the northern aisle of the church in York."[1] But he could hardly have dreamt how fatally the omen was to be fulfilled by the first descent of the northmen only a few months after his return to Gaul. Their incursion again roused civil strife. In the spring of 796 King Æthelred was slain, and whatever was now the connexion of the Northumbrian with the Frankish court, the wrath of Charles against a race whom he denounced as "murderers of their lords" was hardly allayed by Alcuin's intercession.[2] All cause of intervention however was removed by the accession of Eardwulf, who succeeded in restoring order for the next ten years;[3] but with

[1] Alc. Op. (Migne), pt. i. epist. xiii.
[2] Haddan and Stubbs, "Councils," iii. 498.
[3] Sim. Durh. "Gest. Reg." a. 796.

the death of Eardwulf in 806 the northern kingdom vanishes from history till its submission to Ecgberht seventeen years later.[1]

Mercia.

Broken indeed by ceaseless strife Northumbria was ready to fall before a conqueror's sword. But no such doom seemed to threaten Mercia. In Mercia the royal stock went on unchallenged. No civil war disturbed the rule of Offa or of Cenwulf. No foreign ruler dared to threaten the Middle Kingdom as Charles had threatened the North. As the eighth century drew to its close, indeed, Mercia seemed destined rather to absorb its fellow states than to be absorbed by either of them. Northumbria was torn by anarchy. Wessex lay almost hidden from sight behind the forest-screen of the Andredsweald. All that the outer world saw of Britain was the realm of the Mercian kings. From Dover to the Ribble, from Bath to the Humber, the great mass of the island submitted to their sway; and to the Frankish court the lord of this vast domain was already "king of the English." The ability of Offa and Cenwulf as rulers, as well as the length of their reigns, heightened the impression of Mercian strength. But even at the summit of

[1] In his "Gesta Regum," Simeon of Durham practically ceases at 803; there are two ecclesiastical entries in 830 and 846, then from 849 the chronicle is for some time wholly drawn from southern sources, and without reference to the north. In his "Historia de Dunelmensi Ecclesia" there is a like gap between 793 and 867.

CHAP. I. The England of Ecgberht.

their power, a close observer might have seen the inherent weakness of the structure they had built up. The kingdom in fact was held together simply by the sword. It stretched from sea to sea; but both on the eastern and the western coast its subject-provinces only waited the hour of trial to turn against it. The Welsh of North-Wales were ready to rise at any moment. Kent, a possession essential to the communication of Mercia with the western world, had risen against Offa and again risen against Cenwulf. The East-Anglians were now preparing to renew the strife which they had waged for centuries against the western Engle. And within Mercia itself there seems to have been little of that administrative organization which might have compensated for the hostility of its dependencies. The existence of five great caldormen seems to point to a perpetuation of the purely local government in the provinces which made up the central realm. It was characteristic indeed of the looseness of its political structure that Mercia had no marked centre of government. Northumbria found a centre at York. Wessex recognised its royal town in Winchester. But Tamworth was simply a royal vill at which the Mercian kings dwelt more frequently than elsewhere. Mercia in fact owed its greatness wholly to the character of its individual kings. A single defeat under Æthelbald had already revealed its inherent weakness;

and the same revelation was to follow its later defeat under Beorhtwulf.

Wessex.

Wessex on the other hand, smaller as was its area and later as was its development than that of its fellow-kingdoms, had a vigour and compactness which neither of them possessed. Its military strength was really greater than theirs. From the first moment of their descent upon Britain the Gewissas had seized a region of surpassing military value. The Gwent was a natural fortress, backed by the sea, screened from attack on either side by impassable woodlands, by Selwood and the Andredsweald, and presenting along its front two parallel lines of heights, whose steep escarpments rose like walls in face of any assailants. Their main settlement, Winchester, lay in the centre of this region; and a series of roads which diverged from it carried forces easily to any threatened point of the border. However Wessex might grow, the Gwent remained its heart and centre; and the inaccessibility of the Gwent was shown by its security from any inroad till the coming of the Danes. Northumbrian hosts might pour over Mid-Britain, or Mercian hosts carry their ravages over Northumbria, but neither Mercian nor Northumbrian ever appeared before Winchester. The bulk of the West-Saxon fights were fought in the district over Thames; and if invaders threatened the Gwent itself it was only, like Ceolric, to be thrown back discomfited from the steeps of

Wanborough. Even Wulfhere after a great victory could penetrate no further into Wessex than the same steep of Ashdown. The varied composition of Ecgberht's kingdom, instead of proving a source of weakness, was itself a source of strength. Its centre was the older Wessex we have described, the region between the Andredsweald and the Selwood; a district of purely English blood grouped round a single political and religious centre at Winchester. To the west lay the newer Wessex, a tract which indeed found a single ecclesiastical centre in Sherborne, but where Welsh and English blood mingled in the veins of the population, and in which the ethnological character varied from the English element dominant along the skirts of Selwood to the wholly Celtic life of the western Dyvnaint. But this newer Wessex was even more West-Saxon in temper than the Wessex of the Gwent. The slowness of its conquest, the gradual settlement of the conquerors over its soil, had bound it firmly to the house of Cerdic, and utterly obliterated its Celtic traditions. And besides this, the two portions were knit together by an administrative order which was hardly known elsewhere. Our ignorance of the early history of Wessex leaves us no means of tracing the origin of this order, but in Ecgberht's day at least it was firmly established. Every folk-district in the realm was placed in the hands of a single

ealdorman, an officer who by this time must have been of royal appointment, and who was above all the leader of its local force or "fyrd." It is through the mention of these officers that we see that Wessex was by this time at any rate parted into the administrative divisions that it still retains, and that the Somer-sætan, the Defn-sætan, and the Dor-sætan had their defined districts on one side the Selwood, as the settlers in the "Bearroc-wood," the Wil-sætan, and the original Gewissas in their tract about Hampton had on the other.

The Wikings and England.

It was this political and administrative superiority, even more than its military vigour, which so suddenly set Wessex at the head of the English states and gave into its hands the work of consolidating the English peoples. In Ecgberht's day, however, that work had hardly begun. Though every one of its states had submitted to his sway,[1] Ecgberht had not become a king of England. He had not even become a king of the Mercians, of the East Angles, or of the Northumbrians. It was not till Ælfred's day, a hundred years later, that a king of Wessex could call himself also king of the Mercians; it was not till Æthelstan that the ruler who was at once king of the West-Saxons and king of the Mercians could add to his title that of king of the Northumbrians. Even then the bond which united the Three Kingdoms was

[1] See "Making of England," cap. viii. (A. S. G.).

CHAP. I.

The England of Ecgberht.

but the personal bond of their allegiance to the same ruler; and it was not till the close of Eadgar's reign that the genius of Dunstan dared to create an England and to crown the lord of the three realms as its national king. But these things were far off in Ecgberht's time. His conquest had given him a supremacy over his fellow-kings, by which they and their peoples were bound to pay him tribute and to follow him in war. But their life remained in all other matters as independent as before. In spite of submission and tribute Northumbria seems to have remained almost wholly detached from its over-lords. Rival claimants for its throne fought on as of old, unhindered by any interference from the south; and the successors of Ecgberht made not a single effort to rescue it from the Dane. East-Anglia remained under its old line of kings, almost as isolated as Northumbria from Wessex, and equally unaided by it in the coming struggle. Mercia itself, broken as it was by defeat after defeat, was far from passing into a mere province of the West-Saxon realm; it retained its old national life as it retained its bounds; and though Ecgberht drove its king Wiglaf from his throne, he was forced after three years of struggle to replace him on it. Even in later years it was by ties of blood and wedlock rather than by more direct bonds of subjection that the policy of Wessex strove to bring the midland realm beneath its sway. It was in fact only by long and patient effort that

this vague supremacy of the West-Saxon kings could have been developed into a national sovereignty; and the effort after such a sovereignty had hardly begun when it was suddenly broken by the coming of the Danes.

CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF THE WIKINGS

829–858

The first Wikings.

In the days of Beorhtric of Wessex, while Offa was still ruling in Mercia, and Ecgberht an exile at the court of Charles, "in the year 787, came three ships" to the West-Saxon shores, "and then the reeve rode thereto, and would force them to go to the king's tun, for that he knew not what they were; and they slew folk."[1] Two hundred years later, in the midst of the long warfare which

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 787, which adds, "These were the first ships of Danish men that sought land of Engle folk." Munch, however ("Det Norske Folks Historie," German transl. by Claussen, pt. iv. p. 186), points out that this entry dates at earliest from 891, when the Danes were really the assailants of Britain, and that a more contemporary entry may be found in the late Canterbury Chronicle (F), where the ships are called "of Northmen from Heretha-land." "It is a strong testimony to the age of this account that the Wikings are called Northmen, for this name was lost in England earlier than elsewhere." "The so-called Heretha-land," he adds, "from which these northmen came can be none other than Hardeland or Hardesyssel, in Jutland, for from Hördeland in Norway no descents upon England had taken place at this time."

opened with the landing of the pirate-band, the memory of that first warning of danger was still fresh in the minds of men. "Suddenly," ran the later tradition preserved in the royal West-Saxon house, "there came a Danish fleet, not very alarming, consisting of three long ships, and this was their first coming. When this came to the ears of the king's reeve, who was then in the tun which is called Dorchester, he mounted his horse and with a few men hastened to the port, thinking they were merchants rather than enemies, and addressing them with authority ordered them to be carried to the king's tun; and by them he and those who were with him were there slain. Now the name of this reeve was Beaduheard."[1] Soon there were few tun-reeves who knew not what these strangers were, for six years later, in 793, their pirate-boats were ravaging the coast of Northumbria, plundering the monastery of Lindisfarne and murdering its monks;[2] and in 794 they entered the Wear to pillage and burn the houses of Wearmouth and Jarrow. "He who can hear of this calamity," wrote Alcuin as the news reached him in Gaul of the ruin of the houses which enshrined within them the religious history of Northumbria, the houses of Aidan and Cuthberht, of Benedict Biscop and of Bæda, "he who can hear

[1] Æthelweard, a. 787. Æthelweard was a descendant of Æthelred I., and probably the ealdorman of the Western Provinces in the reign of Æthelred II.

[2] Sim. Durh. "Gest. Reg." 793, 794.

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

of this calamity and not cry to God on behalf of his country, has a heart not of flesh but of stone."[1]

829-858.

The conquest of England.

The descent of the three strange ships did in fact herald a new conquest of Britain. It was but the beginning of a strife which was to last unbroken till the final triumph of the Norman conqueror. For nearly a hundred years to come the shores of England were harried and its folk slain by successors of these northern pirates, till their scattered plunder-raids were merged in the more organized attack of the Danish sea-kings. The conquests of Ivar and Guthrum and Halfdene in the days of Ælfred were in their turn but the prelude to the bowing of all England to a foreign rule under Swein and Cnut. But in the end the fruit of the long attack slipped from Danish hands. The harvest indeed was reaped, but it was reaped by northmen who had ceased even in tongue to be northmen at all. Not the Danes of Denmark, but the Danes of Rouen, of Caen, of Bayeux, became lords of the realm of Ælfred and Eadgar. It was the sword of the Normans which drove for the last time from English shores the fleet of the Danes.

The Northern peoples.

The new assailants announced themselves as men of the north, men from the lands beyond the Baltic; but this told Englishmen nothing. Though the Jutes who had shared in the conquest

[1] Alcuin Op. (Migne), pt. i. epist. xi.

of Britain had been at least akin in blood with the dwellers on either side the Cattegat, their work had soon come to an end; and with it had ended for centuries all contact of the men of the north with Englishmen. It was not till the middle of the eighth century that dim news of heathen nations across the Baltic came from English missionaries who were toiling among the Saxons of the Elbe; and an English poet, it may be an English mission-priest in the older home of his race, wove fragments of northern sagas into his Christianized version of the song of Beowulf. But to the bulk of Englishmen as to the rest of Christendom, these peoples remained almost unknown. Their life had indeed till now been necessarily a home life; for instead of fighting and mingling with the world about them, they had had to battle for sheer existence with the stern winter, the barren soil, the stormy seas of the north. While Britain was passing through the ages of her conquest, her settlement, her religious and political reorganization, the Swede was hewing his way into the dense pine-forests that stretched like a sea of woodland between the bleak moorlands and wide lakes of his fatherland;[1] the Dane was finding a home in the

[1] Olaf, King Ingiald's son, went westward with his men "to a river which comes from the north and falls into the Venner Lake and is called Klar river. There they set themselves down, turned to, and cleared the woods, burned, and then settled there. . . . Now when it was told of Olaf in

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

Their temper.

reaches of birchwood and beechwood that covered the flat isles of the Baltic, and the Norwegian was winning field and farm from the steep slopes of his narrow fiords.

It was this hard struggle for life that left its stamp to the last on the temper of the Scandinavian peoples. The very might of the forces with which they battled gave a grandeur to their resistance. It was to the sense of human power that woke as the fisher-boat rode out of the storm, as the hunter ploughed his lonely way through the blinding snowdrift, as the husbandman waged his dogged warfare with unkindly seasons and barren fields, that these men owed their indomitable energy, their daring self-reliance, their readiness to face overwhelming odds, their slowness to believe themselves beaten. He who would win good fame, said an old law, must hold his own against two foes and even against three; it is only from four that he may fly without shame. Courage indeed was a heritage of the whole German race, but none felt like the man of the

Sweden that he was clearing the forests, they laughed at his doings and called him the Tree-feller" (Olaf Trætelgia). Ynglinga Saga, c. 46, in Laing's translation of the "Heimskringla" ("Sea Kings of Norway"), vol. i. p. 255. So of an earlier king, Onund, "Sweden is a great forest land, and there are such great uninhabited forests in it that it is a journey of many days to cross them. Onund bestowed great pains and cost in clearing the woods and tilling the cleared land. . . . Onund had roads made through all Sweden, both over morasses and mountains: and he was therefore called Onund Road-Maker" (Braut-Anund). Ynglinga Saga, c. 37, Laing, vol. i. 247.

north the glamour and enchantment of war. Fighting was the romance that alone broke the stern monotony of his life; the excitement and emotion which find a hundred spheres among men of our day found but this one sphere with him. As his boat swept out between the dark headlands at the fiord's mouth, the muscles that had been hardened by long strife with thankless toil quivered with the joy of the coming onset. A passion of delight rings through war-saga and song; there are times when the northern poetry is drunk with blood, when it reels with excitement at the crash of sword-edge through helmet and bone, at the warrior's war-shout, at the gathering heaps of dead. The fever of fight drove all ruth and pity before it. Within the circle of his own home indeed the sternness of the life he lived did gentle work in the Wiking's heart.[1] Long winter and early nightfall gathered the household closely together round the common hearth, and nowhere did stronger ties bind husband to wife or child to father; nowhere was there a deeper reverence for womanhood and the sanctities of womanhood. But when fight had once begun, the farmer and

[1] For their love of home see a touching scene in the Njal's Saga (trans. by Dasent, i. 236). Gunnar, doomed by the Thing to exile, goes down to the ship, then he turned with his face up towards the Lithe and the homestead at Lithend, and said, "Fair is the Lithe, so fair that it has never seemed to me so fair; the corn-fields are white to harvest, and the home-mead is mown; and now I will ride back home, and not fare over sea at all."

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings. 829-858.

fisher who loved his own wife and child with so tender a love became a warrior who hewed down the priest at his altar, drove mothers to slavery, tossed babes in grim sport from pike to pike.[1] The nations on whom these men were soon to swoop cowered panic-stricken before a pitilessness that seemed to them the work of madmen. "Deliver us," ran the prayer of a litany of the time, "deliver us, O Lord, from the frenzy of the Northmen!"

The Northmen and the sea.

What gave their warfare its special character was that its field was the sea. The very nature indeed of their home-land drove these men to the sea, for in all the northern lands society was as yet but a thin fringe of life edging closely the sea-brim. In Sweden or the Danish isles rough forest-edge or dark moor-slope pressed the village fields closely to the water's edge. In Norway the bulk of the country was a vast and desolate upland of barren moor, broken only by narrow dales that widened as they neared the coasts into inlets of sea; and it was in these inlets or fiords, in the dale at the fiord's head, or by the fiord's side, where the cliff-wall now softened into slopes to which his cattle clung, now drew back to make

[1] "Domos vestras combusserunt, res vestras asportarunt, pueros sursum jactatos lancearum acumine susceperunt, conjuges vestras quasdam vi oppresserunt, quasdam secum adduxerunt."—Hen. Hunt. lib. v. prœm. (ed. Arnold, p. 138). A Wiking named Oelver in the ninth century is said to have been nicknamed "Barnakarl" (or child's enecht), because he would not join in the tossing children on pikes. Munch, "Det Norske Folks Hist." (Germ. tr.), pt. iv. p. 232.

room for thin slips of meadow-land and corn-land, that the Norwegian found his home. Inland, where the bare mountain flats then rose like islands out of a sea of wood, the country was strange and dread to them; for the boldest shrank from the dark holts and pools that broke the desolate moorland, from the huge stones that turned into giants in the mists of nightfall, giants that stalked over the fell till the grey dawn smote them into stone again, from the wolves that stole along the fearsome fen-paths, and from the fell shapes into which their excited fancy framed the mists at eventide, shapes of giant "moor-steppers," of elves and trolls, of Odin with his wind-cloak wrapped round him as he hurried over the waste. But terror and strangeness vanished with a sight of the sea. To the man of the north the sea was road and hunting ground. It was a "water-street" between the scattered settlements; for few cared to push overland across the dark belts of moor that parted one fiord from another. Even more than the land about his home it was the dalesmen's harvest-field, for fisher's net had often to make up for scanty corn-growth and rotting crops, and quest of whale and seal carried them far along their stormy coasts.[1]

The life of these northern folk was in its main features one with the life of the earlier English-

[1] See Othere's story in Ælfred's "Orosius," at the close of Pauli's "Life of Alfred," p. 249.

CHAP. II. The Coming of the Wikings. 829-858. Their usages.

men.[1] Their home and home customs were the same. The ranks of society differed only in name. Our ætheling, ceorl, and slave are found in the oldest tradition of the north as Jarl, Carl, and Thrall;[2] in later times Carl begat the Bonder and Jarl the King. There was as little difference in their political or judicial institutions. The bonders gathered to the Thing as the ceorls to the Moot; we see the little "folks" who in our own history so soon fuse into larger peoples in the "fylki," each with its Jarl or King, eight of which found room for themselves in the district of Trondhjem alone.[3] In religion too there was the same kinship. The gods that were common to the Teutonic race were worshipped in the northern lands as elsewhere, though nowhere among the German peoples did their story become clothed with so noble a poetry. The contrast of the warmth and peace within the home of the Scandinavian with the sternness and uproar of the winter world without it woke a wild fancy in the groups that clustered through the long eventide round the glowing wood-ashes of the hearth. Thor's mighty hammer was heard smiting in the

[1] See Munch, "Det Norske Folks Historie," Germ. trans. by Claussen, pt. ii. pp. 140-257, for the details of their life.

[2] See the curious "Rigsmaal" in Edda Samundar, iii. 170-190. Copenhagen, 1828.

[3] Saga of Harald Fairhair; Laing's "Sea-Kings of Norway" (translation of the "Heimskringla"), vol. i. p. 275. For the Fylki see Munch, "Det Norske Folks Hist." Germ. trans. pt. i. p. 126, etc.

thunder peal that rolled away over the trackless moors. Odin's mighty war-cry was heard in the wind-blast that rushed howling out to sea. The faint and brief daylight of mid-winter pointed forward to that "twilight of the gods," when even they should yield to the weird that awaited them, and the All-father himself should die.

Their warfare.

There was the same likeness in their usages of war. In both peoples the war-band lay at the root of all. The young warriors of the folk gathered round a war-leader for fight and foray; sometimes the king of this dale or that summoned his fighting-men for more serious warfare; sometimes a farmer when seed-time was over mustered his bondmen for a harvest of pillage ere the time came for harvesting his fields. To reap the one harvest was counted through the north as honest and man-worthy a deed as to reap the other.[1] But while the English war-band made its foray over land, the northern war-band made its foray over sea. From the "wik," or creek where their long-ship lurked, the "Wikings," or "creek-men,"[2] as the adventurers were called, pounced upon their prey, or crept along the iron-bound coast,

[1] See the story of Swein, Asleif's son, in the "Orkneyinga Saga" (tr. by Anderson), c. 72, etc., pp. 117, sq.

[2] For derivation and history of this word, see Munch, "Det Norske Folks Hist." pt. iv. p. 237 (German translation). It is used solely by voyagers to the western, never by those to the eastern seas. [For the meaning "men of *the* Bay," from the *Wick*, see "Corpus Poeticum Boreale" (ed. by G. Vigfusson and F. York Powell), I. lxiii. (A. S. G.)]

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

striking here and there up the fiords to harry and to slay. The "long-ship" itself in its very construction was above all a pirate ship; of great length, but narrow beam and little depth of keel,[1] its admirable lines and all but flat bottom showed that it was built exclusively for speed. In rough water indeed the Wiking ships were almost unmanageable, and a storm like that off the coast of Lindisfarne in 794 threw them helpless on the beach. Nor were they adapted for long sea journeys; there was little accommodation for crew or cargo; and the pirates were forced to moor at each sunset, to make a foray for what cattle might serve for their meal, and sleep beneath a sail on the beach. In fighting too, their slightness of construction, fastened together as their timbers often were by wattles of tree-roots for lack of iron, forbade any use of them in shock of ship against ship;[2] they were in fact lashed together, and their stern and forecastle used as platforms for their fighting crews. But they were well fitted for their special end. A

[1] The boat found recently under a mound at Gokstad in Norway is about seventy-eight feet long by sixteen and a half feet broad, and between five and six feet deep. She would draw about four feet of water, and was driven by sixteen oars on either side.

[2] The ships of the Wikings were not designed for sea fights; their main object was to serve merely as a means of transport from one field of plunder to another. See K. Maurer's review of Steenstrup's "Indledning i Normannertiden (Normannerne, Bind i.)" in the "Jenäer Literatur-Zeitung," 4th series, No. 2 Jan. 13, 1877, p. 25. (A. S. G.)

heavy merchant vessel lay at the mercy of the Wiking's "keel," as it darted out from covert of headland or isle, while its flat bottom and shallow draught of water made every river-mouth a haven, and every river a road into the land that the pirates lusted to pillage.

Causes of their movement to the south.

At the causes that drew these men with the close of the eighth century[1] to their attack on western Christendom we can do little more than guess; for history of the north as yet there is none.[2] It may be, as after legend told, that the growth of population had outstripped the resources of the fiords, and the little commonwealths were forced by very hunger to drive out their younger folk.[3] It may be that the work of union which was at last to knit these commonwealths together into peoples and nations, as well as the revolt

[1] The Scandinavian legends carry the conquests of the Northmen back to a far earlier time. But the joint evidence of the English, Irish, and Frankish chroniclers is conclusive in establishing the real date of their first attacks.

[2] Munch, in the opening of his great work, "Det Norske Folks Historie," has striven to penetrate the darkness by the help of philology, the older genealogies, etc.; but his success is far from being commensurate with his industry.

[3] Laing ("Sea Kings of Norway," i. 109) shows the impossibility of widening the little farms along the fiords, and the consequent necessity for constant emigration. It is still seen in the large number of Scandinavian emigrants to America. See Munch, "Det Norske Folks Hist." (Germ. trans.), pt. i. p. 173, and Dudo, "Exuberantes atque terram, quam incolunt, habitare non sufficientes, collecta sorte multitudine pubescentium, veterrimo ritu in externa regna extruduntur nationum, ut adquirant sibi præliando regna, quibus vivere possint pace perpetuâ" (Duchesne, "Histor. Norm." p. 62). Olaf Trygvasson's Saga mentions a tradition that in case of famine all who could

CHAP. II. The Coming of the Wikings. 829-858.

against it, had already begun. The men of the north shared with the rest of the Teutonic family its love of freedom and self-government; but the severance of settlement from settlement by long reaches of desolate moorland gave this spirit of independence a harder and fiercer tone than elsewhere. It became a wild and passionate hatred of the subordination and obedience which wider union and a common government necessarily bring with them. No seas were too strange to traverse, no land too far to fly to, when the northman was called to bow to the rule of a common king. But the full effect of this temper was not to be felt for a hundred years, and in seeking for the causes of their action at this earlier time it is perhaps needless to look further than to the hope of plunder. What a spell the sudden disclosure of a world's wealth casts on whole peoples we know from the memories of the Spain of Charles the Fifth and the England of Elizabeth. But the expeditions of Cortes or Raleigh were only the last outbreaks of a passion which had lingered on from the very outset of human history. As soon as men gathered in village and seaport

not feed themselves, old and sick, were slain. [Steenstrup accepts the theory of over-population (which he attributes to the practice of polygamy) as the cause of emigration. K. Maurer, on the other hand, argues from the account given in Landnamabok of Harald Fairhair's attempts to check emigration that the country cannot have been over-peopled. See Maurer's review of Steenstrup in "Jenäer Literatur-Zeitung," Jan. 13, 1877, p. 25. (A. S. G.)]

Lines of NORTHERN INVASIONS.

Lines of the Northmen from South Jutland & Westfold, shown thus:-

Lines of the Ostmen, or White Strangers...

Lines of the Danes...

Walker & Boutall del. et sc.

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

the boats of Greek pirates swarmed over the Hellenic seas. Rome in the very height of her power had to battle with pirate fleets which grew with the growing commerce of the Mediterranean. It was the wealth of the Empire, the dream of sacking her towns and pillaging her treasures, which drew on her the German peoples in her decay. And now that the world which had reeled under that mighty shock was again organizing itself round powers which recalled the greatness as well as the name of Rome—now that commerce was covering the sea afresh with its merchant boats, and new towns rising within deserted walls, and wealth gathering once more under the shelter of church and abbey, the thirst for plunder woke again in the north. The boats which had sailed from its fiords to pillage the dales of their neighbours steered southwards for a richer spoil.

The Wikings and the Franks.

From the opening of the ninth century we see them pushing boldly to the south along two distinct lines of advance on either side of Britain, along the coast of Ireland, and along the coast of Gaul. The starting-point of the last advance was a region familiar to us as the original Engle-land,[1] but which was now known as South Jutland, and whose earlier peoples had been replaced by dwellers

[1] Wulfstan told Ælfred of his sail past "Jutland, Zeeland, and many islands." "In these lands," comments the King, "the Engle dwelt before they came hither to this land."—Ælfred's "Orosius," in Pauli's "Life of Alfred," p. 253.

of Scandinavian blood. The political geography of the north was far from having taken as yet its after-shape. The kingdom of Swithiod indeed in the lands about Upsala already gave promise of the future Sweden, but only a germ of the later Norway could be seen in the little kingdom of Westfold round the Christiania fiord. Small however as this was, it had shown itself vigorous enough to set up a line of dependent kings in South Jutland;[1] and it was the raids of these kings along the Frankish shores that in the year 800, when his power had reached its highest point, drew Charles the Great to the northern borders of his realm. The garrisons he stationed along the coast, as well as a fleet which he ordered to be built in its harbours, showed how keen was his sense of the danger that threatened the western world. His precautions indeed were not an hour too soon. In 803, during his last struggle with the Saxons, Gudröd or Godfrid, king both of Westfold and South Jutland, advanced with a fleet as far as Sleswick, and gave shelter to the warriors who fled from the sword of the Franks. Five years later a raid of the same king across the Elbe again called the Frankish arms to the north, and Godfrid drew across the peninsula the defensive line of earthworks called the Dane-work to arrest them.

[1] For these kings in Westfold and South Jutland, see Munch, "Det Norske Folks Historie" (Germ. trs.), pt. iv. pp. 134-154.

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings. 829-858.

Their descents on Frisia.

So formidable indeed was this freebooter's presence that Charles was already preparing an expedition against Jutland when Godfrid himself challenged the encounter in 810 by a descent on Frisia with two hundred ships, and, making himself master of the country after three combats with its people, boasted that he would soon go and enthrone himself in the emperor's own Aachen. The danger indeed passed away as suddenly as it had risen, for the northern king was slain by one of his followers; his kingdom was broken up; and a nephew, Heming, who succeeded him in the Jutish part of it, made peace with the Franks. But even this peace, and a civil war among the northmen which followed it, did not quiet the emperor's anxiety, for on the eve of his death, in the autumn of 811, we find him visiting Boulogne to see the ships whose building he had ordered the year before; and after restoring the old Roman lighthouse which served to guide ships along the coast, he made his way thence to the banks of the Scheldt, where vessels were also in process of construction. During the early part of the reign of his son, the Emperor Lewis, a continuance of the civil war among the northmen served even more than these fleets to secure the Frankish coast; and the aid of the emperor enabled Harold or Heriold, one of the claimants of the throne, again to detach Jutland from Westfold. But Harold's conversion to Christianity was at

once followed by his expulsion from the land; and from this moment the old attacks were resumed as fiercely as ever, till the strife between Lewis and his sons broke down the barriers between the northmen and their prey, and the pirate-boats ravaged without hindrance from the mouth of the Elbe to the mouth of the Rhine.

The Wikings and Ireland.

It was a party of these marauders along the Frankish coast who at last pushed across the Channel to the mouth of the Thames and ravaged in 834 the Isle of Sheppey.[1] But whatever influence the advance of the Wikings along the coast of Gaul may have had on the southern or eastern states of Britain, the attention of Ecgberht himself must have been fixed even more intently on their parallel line of advance to the west.[2] Ireland was as yet a more tempting prey for the pirates than even Gaul.[3] It was at the monasteries that these earlier raids were mainly aimed; and nowhere were the monastic houses so many and so rich. It was in these retreats indeed, sheltered as men deemed by their holiness from the greed of

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 832 (4).

[2] Additional proof that the earlier attacks on southern Britain came from Ireland is given by a hoard of Anglo-Saxon coins, many of them Kentish, found at Delgany in Wicklow, to which attention has been drawn by Mr. John Evans. The latest in date are those of Beornwulf, from 820 to 824, while neither in Sweden nor Denmark have such coins been found of earlier date than 830.

[3] For the Northmen in Ireland, see especially "The War of the Gædhil with the Gaill," ed. by Dr. Todd, 1867; and its learned Introduction.

CHAP. II. The Coming of the Wikings. 829-858.

the spoiler, that the whole wealth of the country was stored; and the goldwork and jewelry of their shrines, their precious chalices, the silver-bound horn which king or noble dedicated at their altars, the curiously wrought covering of their mass-books, the hoard of their treasure-chests, fired the imagination of the northern marauders as the treasures of the Incas fired that of the soldiers of Spain. News spread fast up dale and fiord how wealth such as men never dreamed of was heaped up in houses guarded only by priests and shavelings who dared not draw sword. The Wikings had long been drawing closer to this tempting prey. From the coast of Norway[1] a sail of twenty-four hours with a fair wind brings the sailor in sight of the Shetlands;[2] Shetlands and Orkneys furnished a base for the advance of the pirates along the western shores of Britain, where they found a land like their own in the dales and lochs of Ross and Argyll, and where the names of Caithness and Sutherland tell of their conquest and settlement on the mainland; while the physical appearance of the people still

[1] The earlier assailants of Ireland are called "White Loch lann," who are supposed to be Norwegians; the later "Danar" or Danes. But "we cannot be sure that the name 'Dane' is not sometimes given to the Norwegians."—Todd, "War of Gædhil and Gaill," Intr. xxxi. Geographical considerations however seem decisive as to the starting-point of the attack on the Isles and Ireland.

[2] Munch, "Det Norske Folks Hist." (Germ. trans.), pt. iv. p. 212.

records their colonization of the Hebrides.[1] Names such as that of the Orm's Head mark their entrance at last into the Irish Channel;[2] and here they had for more than thirty years been ravaging along either coast, but seeking out and plundering above all the religious houses with which Ireland was studded.

The Wikings and the Welsh.

In 832 however, but four years after the submission of all England to Ecgberht, these raids gave way to an organized invasion; for the host of a leader named Turgesius[3] or Thorgils, establishing itself at Armagh, levied tribute from all the north of Ireland. What must have given its main import to this settlement in Ecgberht's eyes was the fact that it brought with it a revival of the struggle with the Welsh. His conquest of Cornwall had seemed the last blow in a strife of more than four hundred years; but the blow was hardly struck when the action of the northmen in the Irish seas roused the West-Welsh to fresh hopes of freedom. The scanty traces of their presence show that the pirates attempted little in the way of settlement

[1] Worsaae, "The Danes and Northmen," sec. ix.

[2] The "Annals of Ulster" note their first appearance in 794 (really 795). "The burning of Rechru by the Gentiles, and its shrines were broken and plundered." Rechru is probably Lambay Island. From a passage in Caradoc of Llancarvan, this would seem to have been after their defeat in a descent on Glamorgan. Todd, "War of Gædhil and Gaill," Intr. xxxii.-iii.

[3] Snorro's Saga of Harald Fairhair (Laing's "Heimskringla," vol. i. p. 304) makes this Thorgils a son of Harald, sent by him to Ireland. But Harald did not begin his reign till thirty years later; and was then but a boy of ten years old.

CHAP. II. The Coming of the Wikings. 829-858.

on the eastern shores of the Irish Channel; there was little indeed to tempt them in the wild Bretland. But behind it lay the richer land of the Engle; and soon it was not as foes but as friends that they were offering themselves to the Welsh for a raid on their common enemy. Such an offer could not fail to find a response; and thus after encountering with varied fortunes the first stray descents upon his coasts, the West-Saxon king found himself face to face with a rising of the newly-won land across the Tamar,[1] backed by armed aid from the northmen. All Cornwall must have risen; for it was at a spot but a few miles from its border that Ecgberht met the forces of the league, on a lift of dreary granitic upland just westward of its boundary, the Tamar, the heights that bear the name of Hengest-dun. But victory was still true to the king; Cornwall was again recovered; and the fight won rest for his own West-Saxon land from the northern marauders through the last two years of Ecgberht's reign.[2]

[1] Cornwall had been conquered by Ecgberht in 823. See "Making of England," p. 432. (A. S. G.)

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 835-(7). In our own English chronicles "Dena" or Dane is used as the common term for all the Scandinavian invaders of Britain, though not including the Swedes, who took no part in the attack, while Northman generally means "man of Norway." Asser however uses the words as synonymous, "Nordmanni sive Dani." Across the channel "Northman" was the general name for the pirates, and "Dane" would usually mean a pirate from Denmark. The distinction however is partly a chronological one; as, owing to the late appearance of the Danes in the middle of the ninth century, and the prominent part they then took in the general

But if the pirate descents failed to loose Ecgberht's hold upon the west, they had a far more momentous result in arresting at its very outset his work of consolidating the English peoples themselves. This work, it must be remembered, had hardly begun. That the vague supremacy which Ecgberht claimed might have been developed into a real national sovereignty by after efforts of the West-Saxon kings is indeed likely enough, if we compare the real strength of Wessex with that of its rival states. But with the coming of the Danes all effort after such a sovereignty was suddenly brought to an end; and the energy of Wessex had from that moment to be concentrated on the task of self-defence. We have seen the strength which Ecgberht's kingdom drew from the physical characteristics and varied composition of the older and the newer Wessex that lay on either side of Selwood. But the power of the West-Saxon ruler stretched beyond the bounds of Wessex, where eastward of the Andredsweald the so-called "Eastern Kingdom" grouped itself round the centre of Kent. Subject as it was to Ecgberht, Kent still retained something of its older greatness; and the existence of the Primate alone would have hindered it from sinking into a mere dependency of Wessex. Nor did it look upon

Wiking movement, their name tended from that time to narrow the area of the earlier term of "Nordmanni." See Munch, "Det Norske Folks Historie" (Germ. trans.), pt. iv. pp. 135-137.

CHAP. II. The Coming of the Wikings. 829-858.

itself as a conquered country or as linked to Wessex simply by the sword; for Ecgberht claimed to be nearest in blood to the house of Hengest, and to be thus as fully hereditary king of Kent as he was of Wessex. The two kingdoms therefore were united, not by a subordination of one to the other, but by their obedience to a common king. Such a relation made it possible to solve the problem of the government of Kent by setting over it as under-king the elder among the sons of the king of Wessex, and by grouping about it Essex, Surrey, and Sussex, to form a realm which bore the name of the Eastern Kingdom.[1]

Its military organization.

Differences so marked as those which existed between the three divisions of Wessex might well have imperilled its political unity; what they actually did was to triple its military strength. We shall see the Danes conquering Northumbria or Mercia in a single campaign. But to conquer Wessex required a threefold effort. When the pirates, after years of ravage, had practically torn from it the Eastern Kingdom, Wessex itself faced the invaders behind the Andredsweald; and even when the older realm had at last been overrun, a West-Saxon king could still fall back on the Wessex beyond Selwood. And to this natural strength was added the strength of a distinct

[1] Charter of Ecgberht, 823; "filii nostri Æthelwulfi, quem regem constituimus in Cantiâ" (Thorpe, "Diplomatarium," p. 66). Æthelwulf's own charter to Chertsey (*ib.* p. 78) shows that Kent here means the whole Eastern Kingdom.

military organization. The fyrd of each folk-district was placed in the hands of an ealdorman appointed by the king; nor was this arrangement confined to Wessex itself, for in each part of the "Eastern Kingdom" also we find an ealdorman acting side by side with the underking.[1] The military value of this organization was soon seen in the freedom and elasticity which it gave to the later resistance against the Danes.

Position of the Church.

But Ecgberht was far from relying only on his warlike resources. In his attitude towards the Church he followed no doubt the example of the Frankish kings. From the earlier Pippin to Charles the Great the rulers of the Franks had striven to raise the social and political importance of the clergy. Within their older dominions they looked upon prelate and priest as the main elements of social order and intellectual progress; in their newer conquests they planted religious foundations as centres of a new civilization. Motives of hardly less weight would in any case have forced the same policy on Ecgberht. In the realms which his sword had begun to build up into a new England the Church was the one power which he found unbroken. The anarchy of each kingdom within itself, the strife of one kingdom with another, had only served to give the priesthood a new political weight. In countries where the German invaders

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 853.

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

found Christianity already established, and bowed to its supremacy, the bishop, enthroned in his Roman town and representing the Roman population in its attitude towards the conqueror, had from the first taken a separate political position which strengthened into temporal princedom as time went on. But great as such a position seemed, it in fact brought him to the level of the secular nobles about him. Like them he became necessarily embroiled in civil strife; like them he was the sport of ill-fortune as of good; and ill-fortune meant in his case, as in theirs, exile or deposition or death. But an English bishop was from the first one in blood and interest with the whole of his English flock. His diocese was the kingdom. His bishop's seat was the king's town. He sate beside king or ealdorman in folk-moot or witenagemot. His position was as national as theirs; but it had in it an element of permanence which their position lacked. At the close of the eighth century, while kings were being set aside and ealdormen slain, the bishop, drawn by no personal interest into the strife of warring factions, rested unharmed in his bishop's chair. In realms like Kent, where the civil organization broke utterly down, its ruin only added fresh greatness to the spiritual organization beside it. The weakness of the later kings of Hengest's race, their wreck in the struggle of Wessex and Mercia for the Kentish kingdom, raised the Archbishops of Canterbury into a power

with which rulers like Offa and Cenwulf were forced to reckon.

Ecgberht's ecclesiastical policy.

The policy of the Mercian kings had been one of jealousy of this new power and influence of the Church. Ecgberht on the other hand, like the Frank sovereigns in whose court he learned the art of rule, seized on the priesthood as allies and co-operators in the work he had to do. His earlier work of national consolidation indeed was a work which the Church had been doing ever since the days of Theodore. Its synods were the first national gatherings; its canons the first national laws; its bishops, chosen as they often were with little regard to their local origin, were the first national officers. The national character of the Church rose into yet greater prominence as the hopes of political union died away; and from the defeat of Æthelbald to Ecgberht's day the ecclesiastical body remained the one power that struggled against the separatist tendencies of the English states and preserved some faint shadow of national union. That Ecgberht should seek its aid in his work of consolidation and order would in any case therefore have been natural enough.[1] But the inroads of the Wikings supplied a yet stronger ground of union between the Church and the new kingdom. Each suddenly found itself confronted by a common enemy. The foe that threatened

[1] For Ecgberht's attitude to the Church, see Stubbs's "Constit. Hist." vol. i. p. 269.

CHAP. II. The Coming of the Wikings. 829-858.

ruin to the political organization of England threatened ruin to its religious organization as well. In the attack of the northern peoples, heathendom seemed to fling itself in a last desperate rally on the Christian world. Thor and Odin were arrayed against Christ. Abbey and minster were the special objects of the pirates' plunder. Priests were slain at the altar, and nuns driven scared from their quiet cells. Library and scriptorium, costly manuscript and delicate carving, blazed in the same pitiless fire. It was not the mere kingdom of Ecgberht, it was religion and learning and art whose very existence was at stake. It was a common danger therefore that drew Church and State together into a union closer than had been seen before. In 838 Ecgberht promised lasting peace and protection to the see of Canterbury, and received from Archbishop Ceolnoth a pledge of firm and unshaken friendship from henceforth for ever.[1] Like pledges were given and taken from Winchester, and, as we may believe, from the rest of the English Churches.

Æthelwulf.

This alliance was the last political act of Ecgberht's reign, but its results were felt as soon as his son Æthelwulf mounted the throne in the year which followed it, 839; and the energetic attitude of such a bishop as Ealhstan of Sherborne, the political influence of Bishop Swithun of Winchester, mark the new part which the Church was

[1] Stubbs and Haddan, "Councils," iii. 617.

henceforth to play in English affairs. As bishop of the royal city of Winchester Swithun was naturally drawn close to the throne; and throughout Æthelwulf's days he seems to have acted as the king's counsellor.[1] But Æthelwulf was far from being the mere tool of his minister. To the charges made in later times against the son of Ecgberht the actual history of his reign gives little countenance. He is reproached with weakness and inactivity, with an unwarlike temper, and with an excessive devotion to the Church. But it is hard to see any want of energy in the king's actual conduct. His steady fight with the Danes, as well as the crowning victory which foiled their heaviest attack at Aclea, show his worth as a warrior; while the firmness with which he carried out Ecgberht's policy at home and his effort to organize a common European resistance to the northern marauders show his capacity as a statesman.

The Wikings attack Wessex.

Æthelwulf had hardly mounted the throne when he had to meet the foe whom his father's sword had driven for a brief space from the land, for not even such a victory as Hengest-dun could long check the attack of the pirates who were cruising in ever growing numbers over the Irish Sea. Their successes, as we have seen, had now given them a base of operations in Ireland itself, the north of which seemed passing into the hands

[1] Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), vol. i. p. 151.

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

of the Wikings.[1] Undisputed master of Ulster, Thorgils dealt a heavy blow at the religion and civilization of the island by the destruction of Armagh, and pressed hard upon Meath and Connaught. Meanwhile, scattered squadrons were seizing point after point along the shore, raising forts and planting colonies to which Ireland owed the rise of its earliest towns, for Dublin, Waterford, Limerick, and Cork all sprang from pirate settlements.[2] It was thus from a land that seemed all but their own that the Ostmen, as the Wikings were called in these parts, could direct their attacks against the unharried country across St. George's Channel. But they found a vigorous and well-organized resistance. In 837 an attack on the very heart of the realm was repulsed by the fyrd of Hamton-shire under ealdorman Wulfheard.[3] The bulk of the pirate raids however were as yet directed against the country to the west beyond Selwood, the district which from its half Celtic population was known as that of the Wealh-cyn, and where, in spite of the failure of the Cornwealas in their revolt against Ecgberht, they might still hope for aid from the western Welsh. Here however the local fyrds fought as

[1] For the character of Thorgils' settlement, see Todd, "War of Gædhil and Gaill," Intr. p. xlviii.

[2] "It was in 837 or 838 that Dublin was first taken by the foreigners, who erected a fortress there in 841 or 842."—Todd, "War of Gædhil and Gaill," Introd. p. liii.

[3] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 837.

resolutely as in Hamton-shire. In the very year of Wulfheard's success caldorman Æthelhelm at the head of the Dorset-folk fell beaten after a well-fought struggle with a pirate force which landed at Portland;[1] and three years later King Æthelwulf was himself defeated in an encounter with thirty-five pirate ships at their old landing-place at Charmouth;[2] but in 845 the fyrds of Somerset and Dorset, with their caldormen and their bishop Ealhstan at their head, repulsed the invaders with heavy loss at the mouth of the Parret, and six years later they were driven back with slaughter by the fyrd and caldorman of Devon.[3]

The stout fighting of the men of Wessex was no doubt aided by a sudden weakening in the position of their assailants; for in the year of Bishop Ealhstan's victory at the Parret, Thorgils was slain in a rising of the Irish tribes of the north,[4] and his host driven from the land, while the Ostmen of the coast wasted their strength in bitter warfare between the older settlers and fresh comers from the northern lands.[5] But whether from her own resistance or the weakness of her foes, Wessex at last gained

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), 837.
[2] *Ibid.* 840.
[3] *Ibid.* 845, 851.
[4] See for date Todd, "War of Gædhil and Gaill," Intr. xliii.
[5] According to the "Annals of Ulster," the "Dubhgaill," Black Gentiles, or Danes, first came to Ireland in 851, and their coming was at once followed by a great battle with the "Fingaill," or Norwegians.—Todd, "War of Gædhil and Gaill," Intr. lxxviii.

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

a breathing-space in the struggle: and for twenty years to come only a single descent on her coast disturbed the peace which she had won. The cessation of the strife in one quarter, however, was but the signal for its outbreak in another. The Wikings, as we have seen, had pushed forward from their home in two parallel lines of advance, one, mainly from Norway, by the Shetlands and the Hebrides along the coast of Ireland, the other, mainly from South Jutland, along the coast of Friesland and of Gaul. The last had till now found a formidable barrier in the resistance of the empire. But the wars which broke out only a few years after Æthelwulf's accession between the sons of Lewis the Pious threw open Frank-land to the pirates' arms; and after pushing up the Seine and the Loire to the sack of Rouen and Nantes they reached the Garonne in 844, and wrecked its country as far as Toulouse. In 845 a mighty host crowned the work of havoc by the sack of Paris; and with fresh fire thus added to their greed, fleet after fleet poured along the coast of Gaul. Their aid roused the Bretons into revolt; while victories over the troops of the Franks gave Saintes and Limoges to pillage. The pirate raids threatened to take the form of permanent conquests. One host settled down in Friesland; another seized the district between the Scheldt and the Meuse; the fleets which pillaged along the Seine and the Loire began to winter

boldly in the islands of the two rivers; while in 848 a pirate force mastered the town of Bordeaux and made it a place of arms. From this hour the Wikings were masters of western Frankland, moving with little resistance from river to river, and gathering booty at their will.

They attack Kent.

It may have been the very success of their work, however, on the one side of the Channel that had hindered them as yet from undertaking any very serious work on the other. From the outset of Æthelwulf's reign, indeed, their presence had been felt on the eastern coast of Britain; in 838 we hear of descents on Lindsey and East Anglia;[1] and in spite of the silence of our annals these descents were probably often repeated through the years that followed. On Kent naturally their attacks fell more frequently. Nowhere in Britain was there a more tempting field for the spoiler. Its early civilization, its importance as the road of communication with the Continent, made Kent one of the wealthiest and most thriving parts of Britain; its bounds were steadily enlarging as the Kentishmen cleared their way into the skirts of the Weald, and rescued from the woodland the fertile tract along the upper Medway; and if the silting up of the Wantsum had closed the harbour of Richborough, the growing trade with Gaul had but passed to

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 838.

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

Dover and to Sandwich.[1] The central borough of Kent, Canterbury, was in size and wealth among the greatest of English cities; and it was the seat of a Primacy which the suppression of that of Lichfield left without a rival in southern Britain. What was yet more important in the pirates' eyes was the wealth of its religious houses. Half Thanet belonged to the abbey at Minster; while the estates of the two monasteries at Canterbury were scattered over the whole face of the shire.

The victory at Aclea.

While Æthelwulf guarded Wessex, it was here that his son Æthelstan met the assailants of his kingdom in the east. In 838 the same force which ravaged Lindsey and East Anglia slew ealdorman Herebriht and many with him in a descent on the flats of the Mersc-wara, and harried and slew in Kent itself.[2] In the next year, after a raid on Canterbury, the pirates pushed up the Thames to London and Rochester.[3] Then for a while the land had rest, till in 851 the under-king and ealdorman of Kent repulsed a raid upon Sandwich, and even captured nine of the pirate ships. The squadron, however, which they thus beat off was only the advance guard of a host which was now preparing for an attack; and in the course of the same year a fleet of three

[1] This must have been very early; as Dover was already a port in Ealdhelm's day, and Sandwich in Wilfrid's.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 838. [3] *Ibid.* 839.

The Coming of the Wikings. 829-853.

hundred and fifty pirate vessels, starting, as it would seem, from the settlement which had been made in the island of Betau, moored at the mouth of the Thames,[1] sacked Canterbury, pillaged London in spite of the efforts of the Mercian king, Beorhtwulf, who advanced to oppose them, and pushed through Surrey into the heart of Britain. Here however Æthelwulf, summoned at last to his aid by the Kentish king, threw himself across their path; and a long and stubborn fight at Aclea ended in the defeat of the marauders. More pirates fell on the field, boasted the conquerors, than had ever fallen on English ground before; and the completeness of the repulse was seen in the withdrawal of the host to its old field of plunder across the Channel. But the Wikings were far from any thought of abandoning their prey. Two years later two ealdormen, at the head of the fyrds of Kent and Surrey, fell after a well-fought fight with a host in Thanet;[2] while in 855 the pirates encamped for the whole winter in the Isle of Sheppey.

Conquest of the North Welsh.

What was needed to shake off this persistent attack of the Wikings from Gaul was, as Æthelwulf saw, the alliance and co-operation of the Frankish king who was struggling against them in Gaul itself. If the first result of the pirate storm had been to further English unity by allying the new English state with the English

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 851. [2] *Ibid.* a. 853.

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

Church, its second result was to force the state into closer relations with its fellow states of Christendom. At the beginning of his reign Æthelwulf had opened communications with the Emperor Lewis the Gentle for common action in meeting the common danger; but it is in his later years that we see the first distinct announcement of an international policy, the first English recognition of a common interest among the western nations, in the resolve of the king to cross the seas for counsel and concert with Charles the Bald. Work, however, had to be done before he could quit the realm.[1] On both sides of the Channel, as we have seen, the appearance of the foe from the north had given a signal for the uprising of the Celt; and while in Gaul the Bretons had shaken off the yoke of Charles the Bald and set up again a Breton kingdom under Breton kings, in Britain the West-Welsh had risen against their West-Saxon over-lords, and the North-Welsh had thrown off the Mercian supremacy. So formidable indeed was the last revolt that in 853, two years after the battle of Aclea, the Mercian king Burhred, Beorhtwulf's successor, was forced to appeal to his West-Saxon

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 853; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 6. One part of Æthelwulf's preparation was the grant of a sixth part of the rents from his private dominions for ecclesiastical and charitable purposes (Asser, ed. Wise, p. 8). By an early fraud this was represented as a grant of a tenth of the whole revenue of the kingdom, and as the legal origin of tithes. See Kemble, "Saxons in England," ii. 480-490.

over-lord for aid; and it was only a march of their joint forces into the heart of North Wales, with the conquest of Anglesea, that forced the Welsh ruler, Roderic Mawr, again to own the English supremacy and to pay tribute to Mercia.

Æthelwulf's visit to Charles the Bald.

In spite of the wintering of a pirate force in Sheppey, the two triumphs of Æthelwulf in Surrey and in Wales left Britain sufficiently tranquil in 854 to suffer him to leave its shores. His first journey however recalls to us how much more the danger from the marauders seemed to men of that day a religious than a political one. He undertook a pilgrimage to Rome. We know little of the pilgrimage or of his stay at the imperial city, though it lasted a whole year and cannot but have served to draw closer the connexion of the English Church with the Mother-Church from which it sprang. From Rome however he passed at length to the court of the Franks. Blow after blow had shattered the Frankish state since Ecgberht half a century earlier quitted Charles the Great to seek his throne in Wessex. The vast realm had been torn to pieces by the dissensions of its rulers, as well as by the revival of national spirit among the peoples out of whom it had been built up. A ring of enemies had gathered round it on every border. Sclaves and Magyars pressed on its German frontier. The Saracens wasted Italy. The northmen carried fire and sword over western Frankland, the country west of the Meuse

CHAP. II.

The Coming of the Wikings.

829-858.

and the Rhone, a fragment of the old Frank realm which had fallen in the strife that followed the death of Lewis the Gentle to his youngest son, Charles the Bald. The reign of Charles had as yet been one of terrible misfortunes; for brave and active as he was, his vigour spent itself fruitlessly on the crowd of foes who surrounded him, on the rising of the Breton, the revolt of Gascony, the strife of his own house for rule, the never-ceasing forays of the northmen. Beaten and baffled as he seemed however, Charles fought on; and the struggle of the harassed king, if it failed to save his own realm, did somewhat to save Æthelwulf's. The visit of Æthelwulf to the Frankish court, where he spent three months in the summer of 856, was a recognition of their common work; and his marriage with the Frank king's young daughter, Judith, with which the visit closed, marks probably the conclusion of a formal alliance, perhaps of a common plan of operations with Charles the Bald.[1]

Æthelwulf's return and death.

But the policy of Æthelwulf was in advance of his age. England had hardly as yet realized the need of national unity, and outside the king's

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 855; Prudent. Trec. Ann. a. 856 (ap. Pertz. i. 450), who dates the betrothal in July, the marriage at Verberie on the Oise on Oct. 1, says that Hincmar, "imposito capiti ejus diademate reginæ nomine insignit, quod sibi suæque genti eatenus fuerat insuetum." The marriage can have only been a formal one, as Judith was but twelve years old. The marriage of Judith to Æthelbald, on his father's death, had no doubt the same purely political meaning.

council chamber there can have been few who understood the need of union between the nations of Christendom. The descents of the Wikings had as yet with a single exception been but isolated plunder-raids, and their very success against the invaders would help to blind Englishmen to a sense of their danger. The new connexion with the Frankish king, on the other hand, may have roused suspicions of a plan for setting aside the elder sons of Æthelwulf in favour of the issue of his marriage with Judith; and if such suspicions were once aroused, they would be quickened by the coronation of the queen, a ceremony which was as yet against the wont of the West Saxons.[1] Whatever was the cause of the rising, on his return at the close of 856 Æthelwulf found Wessex in arms. In a gathering at Selwood[2] its thegns had pledged themselves to place the king's eldest living son, Æthelbald who on the death of his brother Æthelstan a few years back had suc-

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 9; Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. 169. At some time before Æthelwulf's journey the question of the succession had been settled in a somewhat peculiar way. His next successor would naturally be his eldest son, the "Eastern King," Æthelstan; but, whether from the failing health which the death of Æthelstan soon after may indicate or no, it seems to have been needful to look further, and to arrange that the crown should pass at his death to his three brothers successively in the order of their birth, setting aside the children of all of them. Æthelstan died before his father's return; and the next son, Æthelbald, may have looked on the alleged coronation of his youngest brother Ælfred at Rome, or on the marriage with Judith, as threatening his right of succession under this arrangement.

[2] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 8.

ceeded him in charge of the Eastern Kingdom, on the throne of Wessex, and their course was backed by Bishop Ealhstan of Sherborne. Swithun, on the other hand, remained true to Æthelwulf, and the Kentishmen welcomed him back to their shores. But Æthelwulf had no mind for civil strife. He was already drawing fast to the grave, and if we judge his conduct by the past history of his reign, rather than by the charges of weakness which later tradition brought against him, we may see in his summons of a Witenagemot to settle this question, the reluctance of a noble ruler to purchase power for himself by again rending England asunder in face of the foe. The voice of the Witan bade Æthelwulf content himself with the Eastern Kingdom; and abandoning Wessex to Æthelbald, the king dwelt quietly in this underrealm for the brief space of life which still was left him.[1]

[1] Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. 170; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 9.

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF THE DANELAW

858–878

A FEW months after his withdrawal to the Eastern realm brought Æthelwulf to the grave at the opening of 858;[1] and Æthelbald enjoyed but for two years longer the crown which revolt had given him. The reign of his brother Æthelberht,[2] who followed him in 860, was almost as short and uneventful; and for some years there was little to break the peace of the land save a raid of the

The final attack on Britain.

[1] "Idibus Januarii," Prud. Trec. Ann. a. 858 (ap. Pertz. i. 451).

[2] By Æthelwulf's will Æthelberht, who succeeded him as under-king in Kent, should have remained there at Æthelbald's death, while Wessex fell to his younger brother Æthelred; but the will must have been set aside by the Witan as inconsistent with the arrangement by which the brothers were to follow one another in order of age. Both the bequest and the setting aside are of the highest import for our after history; the first as the earliest known instance of a claim to "bequeath" the crown as a personal property, the second as showing such a claim to be as yet not admitted.

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

northmen on Winchester,[1] which was avenged by the men of Hamptonshire and Berkshire under their ealdormen,[2] and a ravaging of the eastern shores of Kent by pirates from Gaul in 864. But with the death of Æthelberht and the accession of his next surviving brother Æthelred in 866, the northern storm broke with far other force upon Britain.[3] Its occupation had now indeed become almost a necessity for the Wikings. It was the one measure which could draw their other conquests together. They already occupied the Færoes and the Shetlands, the Orkney isles and the Hebrides. On either side of Britain they were a settled power. The east coast of Ireland was dotted with their towns, while westward their settlements formed a broken line from Friesland to Bordeaux. But in the very heart of their field of operations Britain still lay unconquered, for their descents on its shores had only ended as yet in hard fighting and defeat. And yet it was the winning of Britain which was needed above all to support and widen their conquests to the eastward and westward of it. Had the pirates once become

[1] This was under Weland, whom we find before and after this in the Seine and the Somme.—Munch, "Det Norske Folks Hist." pt. iv. pp. 200, 209-10.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 860.

[3] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 866. Æthelred's accession marks a new step forward in the consolidation of Wessex. Kent and its dependencies are no longer left detached as a separate under-kingdom; and the king's younger brother Ælfred, who would otherwise have succeeded to the Kentish under-kingdom, becomes "Secundarius" (Asser, ed. Wise, pp. 19, 22).

masters of this central post the face of the west must have changed. Backed by a Scandinavian Britain, their isolated colonies along the Irish coast must have widened into a dominion over all Ireland, while their settlement along the Frankish coast might have grown into a territory stretching over much of Gaul. In a word, Christendom would have seen the rise of a power upon its border which might have changed the fortunes of the western world. Such political considerations indeed can hardly have affected any save the leaders of the northern warriors, but for every warrior there was the ceaseless pressure of the pirates' greed.[1] Now that its abbeys were wrecked there was little booty to be got from Ireland; and even Gaul, wasted as it had been for half a century, was ceasing to be a prey worth much fighting for. Britain however still lay practically untouched. No spoiler's hand had fallen on most of its greater monasteries. No pirate's hand had as yet wrung ransom from its royal hoards. From the opening of Æthelred's reign therefore Britain became the main field of northern attack.

The coming of the Danes.

The name, however, under which its assailants were known suggests that a reason for the choice of this new field of warfare, even more powerful than greed or ambition, lay in the appearance of a

[1] Hen. Huntingdon, "Hist. Angl." lib. v. procem. (ed. Arnold, p. 138) puts this well. "Daci vero terram . . . non obtinere sed prædari studebant, et omnia destruere, non dominari cupiebant."

CHAP. III.

The Making of the Danelaw.

858-878.

new body of assailants.[1] It is now that we first hear of the Danes. The assailants of the Franks had been drawn, as we have seen, from the northmen of South Jutland, those of Ireland from the northmen of Norway. But while these earlier Wikings were doing their work on either side of Britain, another people of the same Scandinavian blood had been taking form along the south-western coast of the present Sweden, and had spread from thence over Zeeland with its fellow isles and the north of our Jutland.[2] These were the men who now came to the front under the name of the Danes; and that they brought a new force and a more national life to the struggle is plain from the character which it immediately took. The petty squadrons which had till now harassed the coast of Britain made way for host; larger than had fallen on any country in the wests while raid and foray were replaced by the regular campaigns of armies who marched to conquer, and whose aim was to settle on the land they had won.

Character of their warfare.

The numbers in which the Danes drew together showed their consciousness that the work they were taking in hand was work such as the pirates had never taken in hand before. But their numbers are far from explaining the rapidity and completeness of their success in the coming strife.

[1] See Dahlmann, "Gesch. von Dannemark," i. p. 65.

[2] From Othere's voyage (in Ælfred's "Orosius") which is our earliest historical authority, it is clear that the Danes had reached these limits before the close of the ninth century.

The real force of the northern warriors in fact everywhere lay not in numbers but in their superiority as soldiers to the men they met. As assailants indeed their natural advantages were great; for their mastery of the sea gave them along every coast a secure basis of operations, while every river furnished a road for their advance.[1] But the caution and audacity with which they availed themselves of these advantages showed a natural genius for war. To seize a headland or a slip of land at a river mouth, to draw a trench across it and back their trench with earthworks, to haul up their vessels within this camp and assign it a camp-guard, was the prelude to each northern foray; and it was only when their line of retreat was secured that they pushed into the heart of the land.[2] From the moment of their advance caution seemed exchanged for a

[1] It is possible that the boats which may be seen making up the Humber with the tide to Goole and the Trent, and which are still known as "keels," may fairly represent to us "keels" of earlier times. Their large, red-brown sails, about seventy feet long, are but a few feet shorter than that of the Wikings' ship of Gokstad; sails of that kind rising above the fringe of reeds and over the long reaches of marsh-land must often have struck terror into the dwellers on the Humbrian shores. (A. S. G.)

[2] In their own land, which was penetrated throughout by arms of the sea, no spot lay more than ten miles from the water, and the whole country was thus necessarily exposed to pirate raids, such as those of the Wendish sea-rovers who for a time made a part of the coast of Jutland a mere desert. It was under these conditions that the Danes had learned their special mode of warfare. See Dahlmann's "Geschichte von Dannemark," vol. i. pp. 129, 136. (A. S. G.)

reckless daring. But their daring was far from being reckless. They were in fact the first European warriors who realized the value of quick movement in war. The earliest work of the marauders was to seize horses; once mounted, they rode pillaging into the heart of the land; and the speed with which they hurried along baffled all existing means of defence. While alarm beacons were flaming out on hill and headland, while shire-reeve and town-reeve were mustering men for the fyrd, the Dane had already swooped upon abbey and grange. When the shire-host was fairly mustered the foe was back within his camp; and the country folk wasted their valour upon entrenchments which held them easily at bay till the black boats were shoved off to sea again. Nor was this all. The Danes were as superior to their opponents in tactics as in strategy. An encounter between the shire-levies and the pirates was a struggle of militia with regular soldiers. The Scandinavian war-band was a band of drilled warriors, tried in a hundred forays, knit together by discipline and mutual trust, grouped round a leader of their own choosing, and armed from head to foot. Outnumber them as they might, a host of farmers hurried from their ploughs, armed with what weapons each found to hand, were no match for soldiers such as these.

It was now nearly fourteen years since the

Danes had appeared in the western seas. In 852 a force of these "Dubhgaill" or Dark Strangers made its way to the Irish coast under a sea-king called Olaf the Fair, himself no Dane, but a son of one of the petty rulers of the Norwegian Upland;[1] and after hard fighting with the "Finn-Gaill" or White Strangers, the Norwegians whom it found in possession of the pirate field, the Danes withdrew to return four years after in overwhelming force. From 856 the Wikings about Ireland submitted to Olaf, and his occupation of Dublin made it the centre of the Ostmen.[2] At the same time Ivar the Boneless, who, whether a son of the mysterious Ragnar Lodbrok or no, was a Skioldung, or of the kingly race among the Danes, seems from the Irish annals to have been fighting in Munster. But for ten years we see nothing more of these leaders or of their Danish followers; and it is not till 866 that we find them united in an attack on the greater island of Britain. While the Ostmen gathered in a fleet of two hundred vessels under Olaf the Fair, and threw themselves on the Scot-kingdom across the Firth of Forth, a Danish host from Scandinavia itself, under Ivar the Boneless, landed in 866 on the shores of East-Anglia.[3] We can

[1] The Landnama Book calls him a son of King Ingialld, who came of the stock of Halfdan Whitefoot, King of Upland.

[2] Todd, "War of Gædhil and Gaill," Intr. p. lxxviii.-ix. "Ostmen" was the name given to the pirates settled on the east coast of Ireland. (A. S. G.)

[3] The English Chronicle calls it a "micel here," but names no leader. Æthelweard however calls it "classis tyranni

hardly doubt that this district had been the object of many attacks since the raid on its shores which is recorded more than twenty years before,[1] for the Danes were suffered to winter within its bounds, and it was only in the spring of 867 that they horsed themselves and rode for the north.

The Danes in York.

Their aim was Northumbria; and as they struck over Mid-Britain for York they found the country torn by the wonted anarchy, and two rivals contending, as of old, for the throne. Though the claimants united in presence of this common danger, their union came too late.[2] The Danes had seized York at their first arrival, and now fell back before the Northumbrian host to shelter within its defences, which seem still to have consisted of a wooden stockade crowning the mound raised by the last Roman burghers round their widened city.[3] The flight and seeming panic of their foes roused the temper of the Northumbrians: they succeeded in breaking through the stockade, and pouring in with its flying defenders, were already masters of the bulk of the town when the Danes turned in a

Igwares"; and the Chronicle names Inguar and his brother Hubba as leaders of the "here" when it conquered East-Anglia four years later. The lists of after writers are made up of all the names mentioned in the subsequent story. I have omitted all reference to the legend of Ragnar Lodbrok's death, which does not make its appearance for a couple of centuries.

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 838.

[2] Sim. Durh. "Hist. Dun. Ecc." lib. ii. c. vi.

[3] "Non enim tunc adhuc illa civitas firmos et stabilitos muros illis temporibus habebat."—Asser (Wise), p. 18.

rally of despair. From that moment the day was lost. Not only were the two kings slain, but their men were hunted and cut down over all the country-side, till it seemed as if the whole host of Northumbria lay on the fatal field.[1] So overwhelming was the blow that a general terror hindered all further resistance; those who survived the fight "made peace with the Pagans"; and Northumbria sank without further struggle into a tributary kingdom of the Dane.

Ruin of Northumbria.

But the loss of its freedom was only the first result of this terrible overthrow. With freedom went the whole learning and civilization of the North. These, as we have seen, were concentrated in the great abbeys which broke the long wastes from the Humber to the Forth, and whose broad lands had as yet served as refuge for what remained of order and industry in the growing anarchy of the country. But it was mainly the abbeys that roused the pirates' greed; and so unsparing was their attack after the victory at York[2] that, in what had till now been the main home of English monasticism, monasticism wholly passed away. The doom that had long ago fallen on Jarrow and Wearmouth fell now on all the

[1] "Illic maxima ex parte omnes Northanhymbrensium coeti, occisis duobus regibus, cum multis nobilibus deleti occubuerunt." — Asser (Wise), p. 18. Flor. Worc. gives the date of this battle as Palm Sunday, or March 21, 867.

[2] Bernicia, however, was not ravaged nor its abbeys destroyed till Halfdene's raid in 875.

houses of the coast. The abbey of Tynemouth was burned. Streoneshealh, the house of Hild and of Cadmon, vanished so utterly that its very name disappeared, and the little township which took its place in later days bore the Danish name of Whitby. It was the same with the inland houses. Cuthbert's Melrose, Ceadda's Lastingham, no longer broke the silence of Tweeddale or Pickering. If Wilfrid's church at Ripon still remained standing,[1] his abbey perished; and though Archbishop Æthelberht's church still towered over York in the glory of its new stonework, we hear no more of library or school. As a see indeed, York in time profited by the blow. On the general fabric of the church in the north it fell heavily; after the sack of Holy Island the Bishop of Lindisfarne was hunted from refuge to refuge with the relics of Cuthbert;[2] the Bishop of Lindsey was driven to seek a new home in the south; while the bishopric at Hexham came wholly to an end.[3] But the ruin of its fellow sees brought to York a new greatness. As representative of conquered Northumbria, and as the one power which remained permanent amidst the endless revolutions of the pirate state which superseded it, the Primate at York became the religious centre of the North at a moment when the North regained the political

[1] It was destroyed by Eadred in 948.
[2] Sim. Durh. "Hist. Dunelm. Ecc." lib. ii. c. vi.
[3] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. p. 274.

individuality it seemed to have lost since the days of Eadberht.[1] The gain of the primacy, however, was a small matter beside the losses of the country at large. The blows of the Dane were aimed with so fatal a precision at the centres of its religious and intellectual life that of the houses which served as the schools, libraries, and universities of Northumbria not one remained standing in the regions over which the conquerors swept. So thoroughly was the work of destruction done that the country where letters and culture had till now found their favourite home remained for centuries to come the rudest and most ignorant part of Britain.

The Danes threaten Mercia.

As yet, however, the Danes seem to have had little aim but plunder; and they were hardly masters of Deira when, setting up Ecgberht as an under-king,[2] they turned to seek new spoil in the south. They seized the passage of the Trent at Nottingham, formed their winter camp there,[3] and threatened Mercia in the coming spring. But their way was suddenly barred. At the threat of invasion the Mercian king Burhred, with his Witan, called for aid from his West-Saxon over-lord.[4] The inaction of Æthelred through the strife in Northumbria shows that in spite of the submission at

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. p. 273.

[2] "Sub suo dominio regem Ecgberhtum præfecerunt," Sim. Durh. "Hist. Dunelm. Ecc." lib. ii. c. vi.

[3] Asser (ed. Wise), pp. 19, 20; Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 868.

[4] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 19.

Dore[1] the northern realm stood practically without the West-Saxon supremacy. But time and the policy of the house of Ecgberht had tightened the bonds which linked central Britain to the West-Saxon crown; and the appeal for help against the Welsh in Æthelwulf's days, as now for help against the Danes, shows that Mercia thoroughly recognized its position as an under-kingdom. The call was heard, and a rapid march brought Æthelred's host to the Danish front at the passage of the Trent. At the head of his joint army of Mercians and West-Saxons the king sought at once to give battle. The Danes however were too good soldiers to be drawn into the field; they fell back on their invariable policy of fighting behind earthworks; and the defences of their camp proved too strong to be broken through, even by the fierce attacks of the English host.[2] But if Æthelred failed to crush the Dane, he at any rate saved Mercia, for a peace between Danes and Mercians at last parted the combatants. While Æthelred withdrew to Wessex, the Danes fell back baffled to winter at York; and the severity of their losses seems to be shown by their inactivity for the rest of the year.[3]

When they next quitted York indeed it was to

[1] The Northumbrians had owned Ecgberht as their over-lord at Dore, on the borders of Derbyshire and Yorkshire, in 827. Eng. Chron. a. 827. (A. S. G.)

[2] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 20.

[3] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 869.

seek another prey than Mercia. It was the wealth of the great Fen abbeys that drew the pirate force, with Ivar and his brother Hubba still at its head, at the close of 869 to an attack on the East-Anglian realm. The Lincolnshire men may, as after tradition held,[1] have thrown themselves across their path; but if so, it was to be routed in as decisive an overthrow as that of York; and Peterborough, Crowland, and Ely were sacked and fired while their monks fled or lay slain among the ruins. From the land of the Gyrwas however they suddenly struck for East-Anglia itself;[2] and crossing the Devil's Dyke without resistance raised their winter camp at Thetford. The success of their inroad was complete. Brave as their strife with Mercia but a few years before shows them to have been, the East-Engle were utterly defeated in two attacks on the Danish camp; and the strife ended with the capture of their king, Eadmund, who was brought prisoner before the pirate leaders, bound to a tree, and shot to death with arrows. His martyrdom by the heathen made him the St. Sebastian of English legend; in later days his figure gleamed from the pictured windows of church after church along the eastern coast, and a stately abbey which bore his name rose over his relics.

Their conquest of East-Anglia.

[1] Ingulf gives plentiful details of this inroad; but it is impossible to make more than general use of so late a forgery.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 870.

They attack Wessex.

How great was the terror stirred by these successive victories was shown in the action of Mercia, for though still free from actual attack, it cowered panic-stricken before the Dane, and by payment of tribute owned his supremacy. This submission brought Wessex face to face with the pirates. The southern kingdom stood utterly alone, for the work of Ecgberht had been undone at a blow, and but five years' fighting had sufficed to tear England north of Thames from its over-lordship. It is hard to believe that such a revolution can have been wholly wrought by the Danish sword, or that conquests so rapid and so complete as those of Ivar can have been made possible save by the temper of the lands he won. The English realms were still in fact far from owning themselves as an English nation. To Northumbria, to Mercia, to East Anglia, their conquest by the Dane must have seemed little save a transfer from one foreign over-lord to another; and it may be that in each of the three lands there were men who preferred the supremacy of the Dane to the supremacy of the West-Saxon. But the loss of the two kingdoms left Wessex alone before the heathen foe. The time had come when it had to fight not for supremacy but for life. It was the last obstacle in the pirate's path. Elsewhere all had gone well with him. Britain seemed on the point of becoming a Scandinavian land. The Orkney Jarls had conquered Caith-

ness. The Scot King had become a tributary of the northmen. Northumbria and East Anglia lay in Danish hands, while Mid-Britain owned their supremacy. Nor did the conquest of Wessex promise to be a hard matter. Except in his one march upon Nottingham, Æthelred had done nothing to save his under-kingdoms from the wreck; and when the pirate host set out from East Anglia its work in southern Britain promised to be as easy and complete as its work in the north.

The Danes in Berkshire.

The leader in the new fray was no longer Ragnar's son, Ivar, who seems to have returned to his conquest of Deira, while his brother Hubba had put afresh to sea with a Wiking fleet which we shall find later on in the Bristol Channel; but Guthrum or Gorm, who may (as later genealogies told) have been of kin to the Gorm who was soon to draw the Danish people together into a kingdom of Denmark. With him marched Bægsecg, the Danish King of Bernicia, and a crowd of jarls, Sidroc the Old and Sidroc the Young, Osbern, and Fræna, and Harald among them.[1] In 871 their host sailed up the Thames past London, and seized a tongue of land some half a mile from Reading for its camp.[2] The country which was to form the scene of the coming struggle was the

[1] We know these as having fallen at Ashdown. Asser (ed. Wise), p. 23.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 871.

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

square of rough forest-country to which the abundance of "bearroc" or box-trees among its woodlands gave the name of Berkshire,[1] a district wedged as it were into an angle which the Thames makes as it runs from its head-waters eastward to Oxford and then turns suddenly to the south to cleave its way through chalk uplands to Reading and the Kennet valley. The bulk of the shire was still wild and thinly peopled, for chalk downs spread over the heart of it from the Thames to Hampshire, and the fertile Kennet valley to the south lay pressed between these uplands and the barren and tangled country about Windsor. But the northern escarpment of the downs looked over the broad reaches of the Vale of White Horse, where the deep clay soil lent itself to tillage where English settlements clustered thickly, and manors of the West-Saxon kings were scattered over the land.

Ælfred.

One of these king's-tuns, that of Wantage,[2] had been the birthplace of the youngest of Æthelwulf's sons, the Ætheling Ælfred.[3] Young as he still

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 1. "Illa paga quæ nominatur Bearrocscire, quæ paga taliter vocatur a Berroc sylva, ubi buxus abundantissime nascitur."

[2] "In villâ regia quæ dicitur Wanading," Asser (ed. Wise), p. 1.

[3] For Ælfred's life the main authority must be the work attributed to Asser. Its authenticity, which was disputed by Mr. Wright ("Biographia Britannica Literaria"), is admitted by almost all other scholars; though the critical examination of Pauli ("Life of Ælfred," pp. 4-11) shows in how damaged a state the book has come down to us. In spite of all difficulties

was, Ælfred's life had been a stirring and eventful one. He was but four years old when he was sent with a company of nobles to Rome,[1] on an embassy which paved the way for Æthelwulf's own visit two years later, and he returned to the imperial city in his father's train. The boy's long stay there, as well as at the Frankish court, left a mark on his mind which we can trace through all his after life. English as Ælfred was to the core, his international temper, his freedom from a narrow insularism, his sense of the common interests and brotherhood of Christian nations, pointed back to the childish days when he looked on the wonders of Rome or listened to the scholars and statesmen who thronged the court of Charles the Bald. There was little, as we have seen, to break the peace of the land as the Ætheling grew to manhood save passing raids of the northmen from Gaul, and the vigour and restlessness of the boy's temper found no outlet for itself but in the chase. But the thirst for knowledge was already quickening within him. It was one of the bitter regrets of his after life that at this time, when he

however "no theory of the authorship or date of the work," says Mr. Earle ("Parallel Chronicles," Intr. p. lvi.), "has ever been proposed which on the whole meets the facts of the case better than that set forth in the book itself, that it was written in 893." Asser has embodied the whole contents of the existing chronicle from 851 to 887, a point at which there are good grounds for believing the Chronicle, as Ælfred found it, to have ended. This coincidence "is strongly in favour of the professed date."

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 853.

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

had leisure and will to learn, he could find no man to teach him. But what he could learn he learned. The love of English verse which never left him dated from these earlier days. It was a book of English songs which (if we accept the story in spite of its difficulties)[1] his mother promised to the first of her sons who learned to read it. The beauty of its letters caught Ælfred's eye, and seizing the book from his mother's hand, he sought a master who repeated it to him till the boy's memory enabled him to recite its poems by heart.[2]

His political position.

As yet however his temper had little political importance; for he stood far from the throne. But death was already paving his way to it. Æthelbald enjoyed the crown but two years after his father's death; and only six years later the death of Æthelberht in 866, and the accession of his one surviving brother Æthelred, set Ælfred next in the accepted order of succession to the West-Saxon throne. The stress of events too called him now to sterner studies than those of letters, for though the consolidation of the Eastern Kingdom with the rest of the monarchy hindered him from becoming its under-king, he held an office, that of Secundarius, in which we may perhaps see a germ of the later Justiciarship; and it was in discharge of these new duties that he marched at nineteen with his brother to the Trent.

[1] See Pauli's criticisms, "Life of Ælfred," p. 51.
[2] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 16.

The policy of Ecgberht's house aimed at a close union with Central Britain: a sister of Ælfred's was already wife of the Mercian king; and in Ælfred's union at this moment with the daughter of an ealdorman of the Gainas, we see a trace of the same policy which brought about in later days the marriage of his own daughter with the Mercian Æthelred.[1] But the marriage feast was roughly broken up, for the young husband was seized in the midst of it with a disease, probably that of epilepsy, from which he was never afterwards to be wholly free. Neither sickness nor marriage however held Ælfred back from the field; he fought in the West-Saxon ranks at Nottingham;[2] and now that the Dane attacked his own Wessex he led the van of his brother's host.

Success of the Danes.

It may have been to save the home of his childhood that the young Ætheling fought so stoutly in the after fights. But king and people fought as stoutly as Ælfred himself, for now that they were attacked on their own ground the West Saxons turned fiercely at bay. We have seen how from the first the Gwent had been screened from invasion by the impenetrable barriers that guarded it on every side, and how the hosts of its earlier assailants had fallen back before steeps such as those of Wanborough and Ashdown. A far different fortune however seemed to await the Danes. They had no sooner reached Reading

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 59.

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 868.

than one of their marauding parties was cut to pieces by a force hastily gathered under the ealdorman of the district; and the check gave Æthelred and his brother time to hurry to the field;[1] but though the king at once assailed the camp which the pirates had formed by running an entrenchment from the Kennet to the Thames, a desperate fight ended in his repulse, and the defeat threw open Wessex to the invaders. As the beaten Englishmen fell back along the Thames the pirates pushed rapidly by the ancient track known as the Ridgeway along the edge of the upland which looks over the Vale of White Horse, till on the height of Ashdown they threw up entrenchments and again encamped.[2]

The battle of Ashdown.

The march of the Danes showed their genius for war. They had in fact thrown themselves on their enemy's rear, and not only cut off his communications with the Gwent but turned its very escarpments against him, for it was Æthelred and not the Danes that had to storm the heights of Ashdown in the coming struggle. From such a post indeed all Wessex lay at the mercy of the invaders. But they had still to fight for it; for neither Æthelred nor Ælfred were men to give up hope at a single blow. Four days after the fight at Reading the English army, reinforced probably by the men of Wantage and the neighbourhood,

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 871; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 21.
[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 871.

stood again face to face with its foes, and Ælfred, who led the advance, at once attacked them.[1] Posted, however, as they were on a hill covered with thick brushwood and sheltered by their usual entrenchments, the Danes held the Ætheling's troops stoutly at bay; and though message after message called Æthelred to his aid the king refused to march till the mass he was hearing was done. "God first and man after," Æthelred answered his brother's cry; and Ælfred could only save his men from utter rout by charging again and again "like a wild boar" up the slope. The king however showed a cool judgment in his delay, for his men were well in hand before he moved; and the general advance of his army at last cleared the fatal hill. The fight raged fiercest round a stunted thorn-tree which men in after days noted curiously ("I have seen it with my own eyes," says Asser), and here with loud shouts Dane and Englishman battled hard. But the shouts were hushed at last. The day went for Æthelred. King Bægsecg fell beneath the sword of the king himself; and five pirate Jarls lay among the corpses which were heaped upon the field.[2]

Ælfred becomes king.

But routed as it was, Guthrum's host sought shelter in the camp at Reading, and its entrenchments again held the brothers at bay. The West

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), pp. 22, 23.
[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 871.

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

Saxons still indeed kept their mastery in the field, beating back the Danes as they tried a new dash along the line of the Kennet, and holding them in check at Basing when with forces strengthened by the arrival of fresh troops from the Thames they struck southward for Hampshire. But the camp at Reading remained impregnable, and every hour of delay told fatally against Æthelred. Already weakened by these fierce encounters, the West-Saxon leader was hampered above all by the difficulty of holding his levies together. Men called from farm and field and looking for support to the rations they brought with them were eager to fight and go home; while the Danes were constantly reinforced by fresh comers, and spurred to new efforts by the need of procuring supplies from the country they won. A change in the relative weight of the two armies at last showed itself, for a new raid upon Surrey brought the pirates better luck than its predecessors; and after a brave fight at Merton, in which their king was mortally wounded, the West Saxons drew off, beaten from the field.[1] When Æthelred's death in April[2] added its gloom to the gloom of defeat, and Ælfred took his place on the throne, the young king (he numbered but two and twenty years) stood almost alone in front of the enemy, for at

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 871.

[2] Flor. of Worc. dates it three weeks after Easter, which, in 871, would make it April 23.

the news of his brother's death the English levies had broken up and gone home.

At this very hour a large fleet of Danes pushed up Thames to join their fellows at Reading, and Ælfred was forced to hurry from his brother's grave at Wimborne with what men he could muster to meet a fresh advance of the foe. But with such forces little could be done to check their march. They seem already to have entered the Gwent and to have encamped at Wilton, the early "tun" to which our Wiltshire owes its name, before Ælfred could meet them;[1] and a desperate attack which the young king made on them there was roughly beaten off. A succession of petty defeats forced Ælfred at last to a shameful truce; and at the counsel of his Witan he bought with hard money the withdrawal of the Danes from the land. The shame was hard to bear, for though bargains of this sort had been common enough in Ireland and Gaul, a purchased peace had as yet scarcely been known among Englishmen; and the distress of Ælfred may be seen in a vow of alms to the holy places in Rome and even in far-off India for deliverance from his foes, which marked this dark hour of his history.[2] But if the gold

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 871; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 25.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Canterbury), a. 883. "This year Sighelm and Æthelstan carried to Rome the alms which the king vowed to send thither, and also to India, to St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew, when they sat down against the army at London." The Danish "here" retired after the truce to winter at London

Chap. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

won a respite for Wessex, it left the pirates free to complete their work in the centre of the island. Granting peace, no doubt on terms of tribute, to the ruler of Mid-Britain, the host after a year spent in Northumbria returned to its camp at Torksey in Lincolnshire to gather fresh forces for a new campaign;[1] then, in the spring of 874, the Danes burst upon Mercia. We hear of no resistance. King Burhred fled over sea without striking a blow to find refuge and a grave at Rome; while his conquerors, setting up a puppet king, Ceolwulf, in his room, took oath of vassalage from him and his subjects, and wintered at Repton, sacking and firing the great abbey which served as the burial-place of the Mercian kings.[2]

Division of the Danish host.

Their mastery of central Britain however only served to give the Danes a firmer base from which to complete their conquest of the island, both in north and south. With the spring of 875 their force broke asunder; one part of it with Halfdene at its head marching northward to the Tyne to

(Eng. Chron. a. 872); but we have no account of Ælfred's sitting down against them; and as this is a late copy of the Chronicle, its entry may be a mere blunder for Asser's entry, "Paganorum exercitus Lundoniam adiit et ibi hiemavit," or rather Huntingdon's copy of this, "quando hostilis exercitus hiemavit apud Lundoniam."

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 873.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 874; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 26. Æthelweard, a. 872. "Myrcii confirmant cum eis fœderis pactum stipendiaque statuunt." From the Chronicle it seems that the Danes took part of Mercia, leaving part to Ceolwulf. Is this the beginning of the division into Danish and English Mercia?

complete the reduction of Bernicia.[1] The aim of the pirates still remained mainly that of plunder, and the religious houses which had escaped till now fell in this fiercer storm. Coldingham, the house of Ebbe, was burnt to the ground. Bishop Eardulf was driven from Lindisfarne, carrying with him the body of Cuthbert as his chiefest treasure, to wander with it for years from one hiding-place to another.[2] When little remained to glean from the wasted land Halfdene led his men through Cumbria, where Carlisle was entirely destroyed, and on through Strath-Clyde[3] to the north, where the Scot king Constantine was battling for life against Thorstein, a son of Olaf the Fair, and the Norwegian Jarl Sigurd who had now established himself in the Orkneys. Thorstein and Sigurd overran the northern parts of the realm while Halfdene advanced from the south, till the Scots, pressed between the two pirate hosts, bought peace for the moment by the cession of Caithness. But while one portion of the host was thus busy beyond the Humber, Guthrum was leading the other half from their winter-quarters at Repton to Cambridge to prepare

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 875.

[2] Sim. Durh. "Gest. Reg." a. 875.

[3] "Pictos atque Stretduccenses depopulati sunt," Sim. Durh. "He made raids on the Picts and the Strath-Clyde Wealhs," Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 875. "Inducunt Pihtis bellum Cumbrisque," Æthelweard, a. 875, lib. iv. c. 3. Skene notes this as "the first appearance of the term of Cumbri or Cumbrians, as applied to the Britons of Strath-Clyde."

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

for a final onset upon Wessex. The greatness of the contest had now drawn to Britain the whole strength of the northmen. Ireland won a long rest as its Ostmen flocked to join their brethren over the sea; and the force of the pirates in Gaul was so weakened that Charles was able to drive them from their stronghold at Angers. But the weakness of the pirates to east and west only pointed to a general concentration of their force upon Britain, and it was with a host swollen by reinforcements from every quarter that Guthrum in 876 set sail for the south.[1]

Guthrum's second attack on Wessex.

Ælfred had equipped a few ships which served to beat off some smaller parties that attacked the coast, but the little squadron was helpless to meet such a fleet as now put out from the harbours of East Anglia. Coasting by Dover, Guthrum made like the earlier marauders for the Dorset coast, and seized a neck of land near Wareham between the Piddle and the Frome for his camp. Ælfred at once marched on these lines; but they were too strong to storm; and gold, we can hardly doubt, again bought a treaty in which the pirates swore on every relic that could be gathered as well as on their own Odin's ring, a sacred bracelet smeared with the blood of beasts offered at the god's altar, to quit the king's land. Ælfred's hold was no sooner loosened however than half of the northern host took horse and, striking across

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 875; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 27.

country, seized Exeter to winter in.[1] The seizure of the city may have been looked on by the Danes as no breach of faith, for Exeter was still in part a British town; but it was just this that made their presence there so serious a danger, and through the winter Ælfred girded himself for a resolute effort to drive them out before their success could cause a Welsh rising. At break of spring in 877 the West-Saxon army closed round the town, while a hired fleet[2] cruised off the coast to guard against rescue. A storm which drove their boats on the rocks of Swanage foiled the efforts of the freebooters who remained at Wareham to rescue their brethren, and Exeter was at last starved into surrender, while Guthrum again swore to leave Wessex.[3]

The surprise of Wessex.

The Danish host withdrew in fact into the Severn valley to winter at Gloucester.[4] But Ælfred had hardly disbanded the army which had taken Exeter when Hubba, Ivar's brother, with a fleet which had been ravaging in the Bristol Channel, struck up the Severn to Guthrum's aid. All thought of the oath they had sworn at once passed from the minds of the invaders; and at the opening of 878 Hubba with a squadron of twenty-three ships made his way to the coast of

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 877.
[2] "Impositisque piratis in illis vias maris custodiendas commisit."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 29.
[3] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 877.
[4] Æthelweard, a. 877, lib. iv. c. 3.

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

Devonshire, while the main body of the northern host again crossed the Avon and pushed by a swift and secret march as far as Chippenham.[1] The surprise of Wessex was complete. The Danes were in the heart of the Gwent before tidings of their advance could call either king or people to arms, and the whole district east of the Selwood lay at their mercy. To gather the fyrd of Hampshire or Wilts or Berkshire in face of the pirates was impossible. Their activity made them masters of the land; "many of the folk they drove beyond sea" over the Bristol Channel, "and the greater part of the rest they forced to obey them."[2] Ælfred alone remained untouched by the terror about him. Falling back through the Selwood on the western-most fragment of Wessex, the land of the Somersætas and Defn-sætas, he seems even there to have found his efforts to gather a force baffled for a while by civil strife;[3] and the band which still followed the king made its way with difficulty to the marshes that occupied the heart of Somersetshire.[4] From Langport to the site of the later Bridgewater, the country between Polden Hill and the Quantocks was little more than a vast morass drained by the deep channel of the Parret. The local names of

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 878; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 30.
[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 878.
[3] "Ælfredo," says Æthelweard, a. 886, "quem ingenio, quem occursu, non superaverat civilis discordia sæva."
[4] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 30.

the district, Sedgemoor, on whose half-reclaimed flats Monmouth was to meet his doom, the "zoys" or rises crowned nowadays with marsh-villages, such as Chedzoy and Middlezoy, preserve a record of the flood-drowned fen in which Ælfred sought shelter. In the midst of it, at a point where the Tone flowing northwards from Taunton strikes the Parret, lies Athelney, a low lift of ground some two acres in extent, girded in by almost impassable fen-lands. It was at Athelney that the king threw up a fort and waited for brighter days.[1]

Defeat of the Danes.

A jewel of blue enamel inclosed in a setting of gold with the words round it "Ælfred had me wrought" was found here in the seventeenth century, and still recalls the memories of this gallant stand. It was only later legend[2] that changed it into a solitary flight, as it turned the three months of Ælfred's stay in this fastness into three years of hiding. The three months were in fact months of active preparation for a new struggle. Athelney was a position from which Ælfred could watch closely the movements of his foes, and with the first burst of spring he found himself ready to attack them. Whatever disunion may have thwarted him before must now have been hushed, for the fyrd of Devonshire gathered round its Ealdorman Odda, and falling suddenly

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 878; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 33.

[2] The legend of St. Neot, written at the end of the tenth century, of which fragments break our actual text of Asser.

Chap. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

on Hubba, whose squadron was harrying its coast, cut his men to pieces;[1] while the men of Somerset rallied round their Ealdorman Æthelnoth. In the second week of May, 878, the whole host of the West Saxons mustered under their young king's standard at Ecgberht's stone on the east of Selwood. Till now their gathering had been hidden from the Danes by this great screen of woodland, and when they burst through it into the older Wessex the surprise may have been as complete as when the Danes burst in from Chippenham. Whatever was the cause of his success, Ælfred no sooner found their host at Ethandun or Edington, near Westbury, than he defeated it in a great battle, and drove the beaten warriors to seek shelter in their camp. But the camp at Edington, unlike the camps which had hitherto repulsed the English, had no outlet by river to the sea; it was possible to cut off its supplies, and a siege of fourteen days forced the Danes to surrender.[2]

The Peace of Wedmore.

The struggle had been a short one, but the completeness of Ælfred's victory was seen in its results. The spirit of the assailants was utterly broken; and while the bulk of the pirate host withdrew under a leader named Hasting to their old quarters in Gaul, Guthrum, the leader of the rest, bound himself by a solemn Peace at Wed-

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 878; Asser (ed. Wise), p. 33.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 33, 34.

changed. Dread as Ælfred might the sword that hung over him, the Danes themselves were as yet in no mood to renew their attack upon Wessex; and with the abandonment of this attack not only was all hope of winning Britain as a whole abandoned, but all chance of making it a secure base and starting-point for wider Scandinavian conquests passed away.

Its effect on Europe.

The tide of invasion in fact had turned; and Europe felt that it had turned. The struggle with the West Saxons had been marked by a general pause in the operations of the pirates elsewhere, for their number was so small in relation to the area over which they fought that their concentration for any great struggle in one quarter meant their weakening and retreat in another. It is clear from the general aspect of the war in Gaul, that the conquest of the Danelaw and the absorption of a large force in its settlement had already weakened the strength of the northern onset upon the Franks. The courage of the peoples across the Channel rose as the pressure of the northmen became lighter; and we see in every quarter a growing resistance to the invaders. But this resistance took a new vigour when the Danes were thrown back from Wessex. The spell of terror was broken. Nowhere had the attack been so resolute; nowhere had the forces of the pirates been so great; nowhere had their campaigns been conducted on so steady and

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-978.

regular a plan; nowhere had they so nearly reached the verge of success. And nowhere had they so utterly failed. The ease and completeness with which the invaders had won the bulk of Britain only brought out in stronger relief the completeness of their repulse from the south.

The Danelaw.

Great however as were the results of Ælfred's victory, the fact remained that the bulk of Britain lay still in Danish hands. If we look at it in its relation to England as a whole, the treaty of Wedmore was the acknowledgment of a great defeat. Bravely as the house of Ecgberht had fought, the work of Ecgberht was undone. The dominion which he had built up was wrecked like the dominion of the Karolings; and for the moment it seemed yet more completely wrecked. The blows of the northmen had fallen indeed as heavily on the one dominion as on the other; but in the Karolingian Empire their settlements were scattered and few, nor had they any importance save in furthering the tendency of its various peoples to fall apart into their old isolation. In England, on the other hand, the Danes had won the bulk of the land for their own. Beaten as they were from Wessex, all northern, all eastern, and a good half of central Britain remained Scandinavian ground. The settlements of the northmen in Frankland, those in Friesland or on the Loire, even the more permanent Norman settlements at a later time on the Seine, were too

small to sway in other than indirect ways the fortunes of the states across the Channel. But in Britain the Danish conquests outdid in extent and population what was left to the English king, and the realm of Ælfred saw across Watling Street a rival whose power was equal to, or even greater than, its own.

The Danes in Northumbria.

Nor was this conquest a mere work of the sword. With the change of masters went a social revolution, for over the whole space from the Thames to the Tees the Danes throughout Ælfred's day were settling down on the conquered soil. Their first settlement was in Deira, in the area occupied by the present Yorkshire. Though their victory at York had left this district in their hands as early as the spring of 868, they contented themselves for the next seven years with the exaction of tribute from an under-king, Ecgberht, whom they set over it, while they mastered East-Anglia and crushed Mid-Britain, and made their first onset on Wessex. But in 875, while Guthrum prepared to renew the attack on Ælfred, Halfdene with a portion of the Danish army at Repton marched northward into Northumbria. It is possible that he was drawn there by a rising of the country in which Ecgberht had been driven from the throne and Ricsig set as under-king in his place; but if so the death of Ricsig marks the close of this rising, and Halfdene marched unopposed to the Tyne. From his winter-camp

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

there he "subdued the land and oft-times spoiled the Picts and the Strathclyde Wealhs."[1] With the spring of 876 however, while Guthrum and Ælfred were busy with the siege of Wareham, he fell back from Bernicia to the south, and "parted" among his men "the lands of Northumbria. Thenceforth," adds the chronicler, "they went on ploughing and tilling them."[2] That this "deal" or division of the land did not, in spite of Halfdene's conquests on the Tyne, extend to Bernicia we know from the fact that hardly a trace of Danish settlement can be found north of the Tees.[3] But the names of the towns and villages of Deira show us in how systematic a way southern Northumbria was parted among its conquerors. The change seems to have been much the same as that which followed the conquest of the Normans. The English population was not displaced, but the lordship of the soil was transferred to the conqueror. The settlers formed a new aristocracy, while the older nobles fell to a lower position; for throughout Deira the life of an English thegn was priced at but half the value of the life of a northern "hold."

Their settlements.

Some of the new settlements can be easily traced through the termination "by," a Scandinavian equivalent for the English "tun" or "ham," while others may be less certainly distinguished

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 875. [2] *Ibid.* 876.
[3] Taylor, "Words and Places," p. 112.

by their endings in "thwaite" or "dale;" and in each of the Ridings of Yorkshire we still find at least a hundred local names of this Danish type. Where they cluster most thickly is in the dales that break the wild tract of moorland along the coast from Whitby to the Tees valley, to which the new-comers gave the name of Cliff-land or Cleveland. Around Whitby itself, the "Whiteby" of the northern settlers, the little town that rose on either side its river-mouth beneath the height on which the ruins of Streoneshealh, the home of Hild and Cadmon, stood blackened and desolate, the country is thickly dotted with northern names. Memories of the pirate faith, of Balder and of Thor, meet us in Baldersby [1] or Thornaby as in the lost name of Presteby or Priest's town; other hamlets give us the names of the warriors themselves as they turned to "plough and till," Beorn and Ailward, Grim and Aswulf, Orm and Tol, Thorald and Swein.[2] A few names of far greater interest hint how race distinctions still perpetuated themselves in the group of little townships. Three Englebys or Inglebys and two Normanbys tell how here and there lords of the old Engle race still remained on a level with the conquerors, or how Northmen or Norwegians who had joined in the fighting had their share in the

[1] Now Baldby Fields.

[2] Barnby, Ellerby, Grimsby, Aislaby (Asulvesbi), Ormsby, Tolesby, Swainby, Thoraldby.

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

spoil.[1] At the other extremity of this district, in the valley of the Tees, a curious coincidence almost enables us to detect the spot from which the settlers came. On the coast of South Jutland we find two towns in close neighbourhood, Middleburg and Aarhus; while in the Tees valley Middlesborough is as closely neighboured by its "Aarhusum" or Airsome. It is hardly possible not to believe that the great iron-mart of Cleveland must look for its mother-city to the little Jutish township, as the Boston of the New World looks for its mother-city to the Boston of the Old.[2]

Their trade.

Cleveland remained for centuries to come a thoroughly Scandinavian district; of its twenty-seven lords in Domesday, twenty-three still bore distinctively Danish names, and names of a like character seem at a yet later time to have prevailed even among its serfs.[3] What drew settlers so thickly there was no doubt the neighbourhood of the sea; as ease of access from the sea drew them to the valley of the Ouse. The swift tide up the Humber, the "Higra" as it came to be called from the sea god Ægir, carried the northern boats past

[1] Atkinson, "Glossary of Cleveland Dialect," Introd. xiv. etc. Even the judicial institutions of the settlers survive in "Thingwall," a spot by Whitby, which has vanished from the modern map, but whose name Mr. Atkinson discovers in a "Memorial of Benefactions to Whitby Abbey" as "Thingvala."

[2] Atkinson, "Cleveland Dialect," Introd. p. xiii. note. The South Jutland "Hjardum" probably finds a like successor in the Cleveland "Yarm" or "Yarum."

[3] Atkinson, "Cleveland Dialect," Introd. pp. xx. xxi.

the marshes of Holderness to the trading port, the "Caupmanna-thorpe" or Cheapman's Thorpe, established by the new-comers to the south of York.[1] Like all men of the north the pirates were as keen traders as they were hard fighters;[2] their very kings were traffickers. Biorn, Harald Fair-hair's son, was "Biorn the Merchant," and St. Olaf was a partner in the trade ventures of his Jarls. The main end of their raids was to gather slaves for the slave-mart;[3] but they brought with them the furs, oils, skins, and eider-down of their northern lands to barter for the wares of the south. Their settlements along the north coast were as much markets as pirate-holds; and York, which from this time became more and more a Danish city, was thronged at the close of a century with Danish

[1] Taylor, "Words and Places," p. 254. "Caupmansthorpe near York . . . the form of the word shows us that here the Danish traders resided just as those of Saxon blood dwelt together at Chapmanslade."

[2] Skiringsal in the Wik was now the centre of northern trade. "The Sleswig ships brought to it German, Wendish, Prussian, Russian, Greek, and Eastern wares, as well as merchants and adventurers from these lands. In Skiringsal indeed the Halgolander might be seen driving bargains with the Prussian, the Trondheimer with the Saxon and the Wend, the Söndmöringer with the Dane and the Swede; beside the walrus-skins and furs from the north one might see amber from Prussia, costly stuffs from Greece and the East, Byzantine and Arabian coins and northern rings, while the harbour lay full of big and little ships of varied build, among which the kingly long-ship was distinguished not only by its size but by its magnificence."—Munch, "Det Norske Folks Historie" (Germ. transl.), pt. iv. p. 141.

[3] We see the actual working of this slave-trade in Olaf Trygvasson's story. He was captured in his childhood, "with his mother Astrid and his foster-father, Thorolf, by an Esthonian

merchants and had become the centre of a thriving trade with the north. The new comers have left their mark in some of its local names: the street leading to its eastern outlet is still Guthrum's Gate; and the church of St. Olave reminds us how at the eve of the Norman Conquest the Danish population had spread to the suburbs of the town.

Their organization.

Over the central vale, from York to Catterick, we find the "byes" planted as was naturally the case pretty thickly, with a "Balderby" among them that suggests how the northern myths were settling on English soil with the northern marauders; and if the eastern wolds present few traces of their homes, they are frequent along the western moors. Of the life or institutions however of these settlers we know little, for from the moment of their settlement to the conquest of the Norman, northern England is for two hundred years all but hidden from our view. The division of Deira into three Trithings, or Ridings, which probably dates from this time, may answer in some degree to older divisions; the East Riding

wiking, as they were crossing the sea from Sweden on their way to Novgorod, and were divided among the crew and sold. An Esthonian called Klerkon got Olaf and Thorolf for his share of the booty, but Astrid was separated from her son Olaf, then only three years old. Klerkon thought Thorolf too old for a slave, and that no work could be got out of him to repay his food, and therefore killed him, but sold the boy to a man called Klærk for a goat. A peasant called Reas bought him from Klærk for a good cloak, and he remained in slavery till he was recognized by his uncle."—Laing, "Sea Kings of Norway," Introd. vol. i. p. 96.

or district of the wolds to an earlier Deira of the English conquerors which seems in later times to have retained some sort of existence as an under-kingdom, while the bounds of the West Riding roughly correspond with those of Elmet, as Eadwine added it to his Northumbrian realm. But the arrangement by which the Trithings were linked together, the adjustment of their boundaries so that all three met in York itself, had clearly a distinct political end, and marks a time—such as that of the Danish kings—in which York was the seat and capital of the central power. The division of the Trithings into Wapentakes, which answer here to the Hundreds of the south, is probably of the same date. In England, as in Iceland, the word may have been originally used for the closing of the district-court, when the suitors again took up the weapons they had laid aside at its opening, and have finally extended to the district itself.[1] The change of the English name "moot" for the gathering of the freemen in township or wapentake into the Scandinavian "thing" or "ting," a change recorded, as we have seen, by local designations, is no less significant of the social revolution which passed over the north with the coming of the Dane.

The Danes in Mid-Britain.

The year after Halfdene's parting of Deira among his followers saw another portion of the Danish host settle in Mid-Britain. While Ælfred

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 109.

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

was still in the midst of his struggle with the Danes about Exeter, "in the harvest-tide of 877, the Here went into Mercia, and some of it they parted, and some they handed over to Ceolwulf" who till now had served as their under-king for the whole.[1] The portion they took for themselves is for the most part marked by the presence in it of their Danish names. "Byes" extend to the very borders of Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, and Northamptonshire, while from the rest of Mercia they are almost wholly absent.[2] It was this western half of the older kingdom, our Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and Oxfordshire, which remained under Ceolwulf's rule,[3] and to which from this time the name of Mercia is confined, while the eastern or Danish half was known, at

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 877. For Ceolwulf see *ib.* a. 874. "That same year they gave the Mercian kingdom to the keeping of Ceolwulf, an unwise thegn of the king" (Burhred, who had fled to die at Rome), "and he swore oaths to them, and delivered hostages to them that it should be ready for them on whatever day they would have it, and that he would be ready both in his own person and with all who would follow him for the behoof of the army."

[2] The country about Buckingham however, which formed the southern bound of the "Five Boroughs," has no "byes." Those about Wirral in Cheshire are an exception which I shall have to notice later on. We find too "byes" extending some few miles into our Warwickshire. I shall afterwards explain why I set aside the notion of Watling Street being the boundary of Danish Mercia.

[3] In 896 we find three ealdormen among the Witan of this part of Mercia. Cod. Dip. No. 1073. The number in the undivided Mercian realm seems to have been five.

any rate in later days, as the district of the Five Boroughs,[1] Derby, whose name superseded the older English "Northweorthig," Leicester, Lincoln, Stamford, and Nottingham. Politically this state differed widely from Danish Northumbria. While Northumbria was an organized kingdom under the stock of Inguar or Ivar, with a definite centre at York and a general administrative division into Trithings and Wapentakes, the independence of the Five Boroughs was unfettered by any semblance of kingly rule. Their name suggests some sort of confederacy; and it is possible that a common "Thing" may have existed for the whole district; but each of the Boroughs seems to have had its own Jarl, and Here or army, while (if we may judge from the instance of Lincoln and Stamford) the internal rule of each was in the hands of twelve hereditary "law-men." There was a like difference in local organization. In the country about Lincoln we find both Trithings and Wapentakes, as on the other side the Humber, but there is no trace of the Trithing in the territory of the four other Boroughs. The distribution of settlers over this midland Danelaw was as varied as their forms of rule. They lay thickest in the Lindsey uplands, where the lands seem to have been treated throughout as conquered country, and to have

[1] The name first occurs in the Song of Eadmund, Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 941.

been parted among the conquerors by the rude rope-measurement of the time. Lincolnshire indeed contains as many names of northern settlements as the whole of Yorkshire;[1] and its little port of Grimsby, whose muddy shores were thronged with traders from Norway and the Orkneys, came at last to rival York in commercial activity.[2] In the districts of the other four towns the names of such settlements are far less numerous; it is only in Leicestershire indeed that we find anything like the settlements of the north.[3]

The Danes in East Anglia.

In East Anglia the northern colonization was of a yet weaker sort than in Mid-Britain. Although this district had been in Danish hands since the fall of Eadmund in 870, its real settlement dated ten years later, when Guthrum led back his army from Wessex after the Frith or Peace of Wedmore. In 880 "the army went from Cirencester to East

[1] Isaac Taylor, "Words and Places," p. 122, numbers some three hundred.

[2] "When Kali was fifteen winters old, he went with some merchants to England, taking with him a good cargo of merchandise. They went to a trading place called Grimsby. There was a great number of people from Norway, as well as from the Orkneys, Scotland, and the Sudreyar. . . . Then he, Kali, made a stanza—

"Unpleasantly we have been wading
In the mud a weary five weeks;
Dirt indeed we had in plenty
While we lay in Grimsby harbour."

Anderson, "Orkneyinga Saga," pp. 75-6.

This however was in the twelfth century.

[3] In Leicestershire Taylor finds one hundred such names, in Northampton and Notts fifty each, in Derby about a dozen. —"Words and Places," p. 122.

Anglia, and settled the land, and parted it among them."[1] Guthrum's realm, however, included far more than East Anglia itself. The after war of 886 and the frith that followed it show that Essex was detached from the Eastern or Kentish kingdom, to which it had belonged since Ecgberht's day, and brought back to its old dependence on East Anglia. With Essex passed its chief city, London, now wasted by pillage and fires, but soon to regain its trading activity in Danish hands, and whose subject territory carried Guthrum's rule along the valley of the Thames as far as the Chilterns and the district attached to Oxford, which now became a border-town of English Mercia. To the north too Guthrum seems to have wielded the old East-Anglian supremacy over the southern districts of the Fen. In extent therefore his kingdom was fully equal to either of the two rival states of the Danelaw. But its character was far less northern. The bulk of the warrior-settlers may have already found homes on the Ouse or the Trent; it is certain at any rate that in East Anglia their settlements were few. The "byes" of Norfolk and Suffolk lie clustered for the most part round the mouth of the Yare; and this was probably the one part of his district where distinct pirate communities existed; throughout the rest of it the Danes must simply have quartered themselves on their English subjects. In the dependent districts to north and south they

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 880.

seem rather to have clustered in town-centres, such as Colchester and Bedford, or Huntingdon and Cambridge, where Jarl and Here remained encamped, receiving food and rent from the subject Englishmen who tilled their allotted lands.[1]

The East-Anglian Kingdom.

The small number of its settlers, however, was not the only circumstance which distinguished East Anglia from the rest of the Danelaw. Its local institutions remained English, while it was far more closely connected with the English kingdom than its fellow states. We find no trace of Trithing or Wapentake within its bounds. It was from the first too a Christian kingdom. A promise to receive baptism was part of the terms of surrender on Guthrum's side after his defeat at Edington; and "about three weeks after King Guthrum came to Ælfred . . . at Alre near Athelney, and the king was his godfather in baptism, and his chrism-loosing[2] was at Wedmore; and he was twelve days with the king, and he greatly honoured him and his companions with gifts."[3] The policy of binding to him as far as he could this portion of the Danelaw was carried on by Ælfred in the later frith made between the two kings with "the witan of all the English-folk" "and all the people that are in East Anglia,"

[1] Robertson, "Scotland under Early Kings," vol. ii. Appendix, "The Danelagh."

[2] Probably the loosing of the fillet bound round the head at confirmation after the anointing of the brow with the chrism.

[3] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 878.

which after marking the boundaries of the two realms, fixed the "wer" or life-value of both Englishman and Dane at the same amount,[1] settled the same procedure for claims to property, and pledged either party to refuse to receive deserters from the army or dominions of the other.[2]

The Danelaw and the North.

From the Tees to the brink of the Thames valley, from the water-parting of the country to the German Sea, every inch of territory lay in Danish hands. The Danelaw was in fact by far the most important conquest which the northern warriors had made. In extent as in wealth and resources it equalled indeed, or more than equalled the Scandinavian realms themselves. To bring this great possession under their overlordship became, we cannot doubt, the dream of the kings who were beginning to build up the petty realms about them into the monarchies of the North; and it is possible that we find the earliest trace of that ambition which afterwards brought Swein and Harald Hardrada to the shores of Britain in a tale which, oddly as it has been disguised, may in its earlier form be taken as a fair record of the relations between the northern homeland and its outlier in the south. "At this time," says the Saga

[1] "If a man be slain, we estimate all equally dear, English and Danish."—Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 155-6.

[2] "All ordained when the oaths were sworn that neither bond nor free might go to the host without leave, no more than any of them to us."—Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 156-7.

CHAP. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

of Harald Fair-hair,[1] "a king called Æthelstan had taken the kingdom of England." Chronological difficulties hinder us from seeing in this Æthelstan the later king of Wessex,[2] and guide us to Guthrum of East Anglia, who had taken the name of Æthelstan at his baptism,[3] or to his son and successor who may have borne the same double name. Whichever of these kings it was, "he sent men to Norway to King Harald with this errand, that the messengers should present him with a sword, with hilt and handle gilt, and also its whole sheath adorned with gold and silver and set with precious jewels. The ambassadors presented the sword hilt to the king saying, 'Here is a sword which King Æthelstan sends thee, with the request that thou wilt accept it.' The king took the sword by the handle; whereupon the ambassadors said, 'Now thou hast taken the sword according to our king's desire, and therefore art thou his subject, as thou hast taken his sword.' King Harald saw now that this was a jest, for he would be subject to no man. But he remembered it was his rule, whenever anything raised his anger, to collect himself and let his passion run off, and then take the matter into consideration coolly. Now he did so and consulted his friends, who all

[1] Laing, "Sea Kings of Norway," i. 308.

[2] In the opinion of the editors of the "Corp. Poet. Boreale" (G. Vigfusson and F. York Powell) this Æthelstane was the King of Wessex.—Vol. i. 262; ii. 489. (A. S. G.)

[3] Æthelweard, a. 889, lib. iv. c. 3.

gave him the advice to let the ambassadors in the first place go home in safety

"The following summer King Harald sent a ship westward to England, and gave the command of it to Hauk Haabrok. He was a great warrior, and very dear to the king. Into his hands he gave his son Hakon. Hauk proceeded westward to England, and found the king in London where there was just at the time a great feast and entertainment. When they came to the hall Hauk told his men how they should conduct themselves; namely, how he who went first in should go last out, and all should stand in a row at the table, at equal distance from each other; and each should have his sword at his left side but should fasten his cloak so that his sword should not be seen. Then they went into the hall, thirty in number. Hauk went up to the king and saluted him, and the king bade him welcome. Then Hauk took the child Hakon, and set it on the king's knee. The king looks at the boy, and asks Hauk what the meaning of this is. Hauk replies, 'Harald the king bids thee foster his servant-girl's child.' The king was in great anger, and seized a sword which lay beside him, and drew it as if he was going to kill the child. Hauk says, 'Thou hast borne him on thy knee, and thou canst murder him if thou wilt; but thou wilt not make an end of all King Harald's sons by so doing.' On that Hauk went out with all his men, and took the way

Chap. III. The Making of the Danelaw. 858-878.

direct to his ship and put to sea—for they were ready—and came back to King Harald. The king was highly pleased with this; for it is the common observation of all people that the man who fosters another's children is of less consideration than the other. From these transactions between the two kings it appears that each wanted to be held greater than the other; but in truth there was no injury to the dignity of either, for each was the upper king in his own kingdom till his dying day."

The Danelaw and England.

But whatever may have been the relation of the Danelaw to the Scandinavian homeland, there can be no doubt of the importance of this great settlement viewed in its relation to the country beyond its borders. It was a first step towards the conquest of England. The hard fighting of Wessex, the genius of Ælfred, had for the moment checked the conqueror's advance. But what he had won was never lost. Small as were the differences of manners and institutions between Englishman and Dane, the Danelaw preserved an individuality and character which even the reconquest by the West Saxon kings failed to take from it. If it submitted for a while to English rule, it remained a Danish and not an English land; and when the final attack of the Danish kings fell on England, the rising of the Danelaw in Swein's aid showed that half his work was done already to his hand. From the landing of Ivar to

the landing of Cnut the attack of the Dane on Britain is really a continuous one ; but the heritage of their victory was to pass into the hands of a later conqueror, and the bowing of all England to a Norman king is only the close of a work which began in the parting of Northern and Central England among the Danish holds.

CHAPTER IV

ÆLFRED

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The weakness of the Danelaw.

MASTERS as they were of the bulk of Britain, the pressure of the Danes on the England that resisted them must in the end have proved irresistible had their military force remained undiminished and had their political faculty been as great as their genius for war. As we have seen, however, they showed as few traces of political faculty or of any power of national organization as in their own Scandinavia, while the number of their fighting men was lessening every day. Already the conquest of northern Britain had done much to save the south; for the attack of Guthrum on Wessex might have proved as successful as the attack of Ivar on Northumbria, had Ivar's men remained in the ranks of the Danish host instead of settling down as farmers beside the Ouse or the Trent. Peace too, and the Christianity which Guthrum embraced, yet further thinned the Danish ranks;

and at the close of the last campaign against Wessex a large part of the invaders followed Hasting to seek better fortune in Gaul. But even those who remained on English ground clung loosely to their new settlements. It was not Britain but Iceland that drew to it at this time the hearts of the northern rovers; and the English Danelaw often served as a mere stepping-stone between Norway and its offshoot in the northern seas. Of the names of the original settlers of Iceland which are recorded in the Landnama, its Domesday book, more than a half are those of men who had found an earlier settlement in the British Isles.[1]

Ælfred's work of restoration.

At the moment we have reached, however, even Ælfred's eye could hardly have discerned the weakness of the Danelaw. It was with little of a conqueror's exultation that the young king turned from his victories in the west. He looked on the peace he had won as a mere break in the struggle, and as a break that might at any moment come suddenly to an end. Even in the years of tranquillity which followed it there never was an hour when he felt safe against an inroad of the Danes over Watling Street, or a landing of pirates in the

[1] Dasent, translation of Njal's "Saga," Intr. p. xii. The most trustworthy accounts, such as that of the Landnamabok, of the first settlements in Iceland show how mixed the population of the British Islands then was. Besides the overwhelming numbers of the northmen, there are found men and women of Danish, Swedish, and Flemish descent who joined in the emigration from Britain to Iceland. (A. S. G.)

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

Severn. "Oh, what a happy man was he," he cries once, "that man that had a naked sword hanging over his head from a single thread—so as to me it always did!"[1] And yet peace was absolutely needful for the work that lay before him. If the deliverance of Wessex had shown the exhaustion of the Danes, Wessex itself was as utterly spent by fifty years of continuous effort, and above all by the last five years of deadly struggle. Law, order, the machinery of justice and government, had been weakened by the pirate storm. Schools and monasteries had for the most part perished. Many of the towns and villages lay wrecked or in ruin. There were whole tracts of country that lay wasted and without inhabitants after the Danish raids. Material and moral civilization indeed had alike to be revived. All however might be set right, as the king touchingly said, "if we have stillness;"[2] and in these first years of peace the work of restoration went rapidly on. Ælfred had to wrestle indeed with the penury of the royal Hoard; for so utterly had it been drained by the payments to the pirates and the cost of the recent struggle that the sons of Æthelwulf had been driven to the miserable expedient of debasing the currency, and it was not till Ælfred's later days that the coinage could be raised to a sounder standard.[3] He had to

[1] Ælfred's Boethius, in Sharon Turner's "Hist. Anglo-Sax." vol. ii. p. 45.

[2] Pref. to Pastoral Book (ed. Sweet).

[3] Robertson, "Hist. Essays," p. 64.

wrestle too yet harder with the sluggishness of his subjects. There were scarcely any who would undertake the slightest voluntary labour for the common benefit of the realm; persuasion had after long endurance to pass into command; and even commands were slowly and imperfectly carried out.[1] Great however as were the obstacles, the work was done. Forts were built in places specially exposed to attack,[2] and wasted lands were colonized afresh. Bishop Denewulf of Winchester tells us how his land at Bedhampton "when my lord first let it to me was unprovided with cattle and laid waste by heathen folk; and I myself then provided the cattle, and there people were afterwards."[3] So too new abbeys were founded at Winchester and Shaftesbury; while the king's gratitude for his deliverance raised a religious house among the marshes of Athelney.

His military reforms.

Busy however as Ælfred was with the restoration of order and good government, his main efforts were directed to the military organization of his people.[4] He had learned during the years of hard fighting with which his life began, how unsuited the military system of the country had become to the needs of war as the Danes practised it. The one national army was the fyrd, a force which had

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 59.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[3] Thorpe, "Diplomatarium," p. 162.
[4] Stubbs ("Const. Hist." i. 220 et seq.) has examined this subject; but we have little real information about it from contemporary documents.

already received in the Karolingian legislation the name of "landwehr" by which the German knows it still. The fyrd was in fact composed of the whole mass of free landowners who formed the folk: and to the last it could only be summoned by the voice of the folk-moot. In theory therefore such a host represented the whole available force of the country. But in actual warfare its attendance at the king's war-call was limited by practical difficulties. Arms were costly; and the greater part of the fyrd came equipped with bludgeons and hedge-stakes, which could do little to meet the spear and battle-axe of the invader. The very growth of the kingdom too had broken down the old military system. A levy of every freeman was possible when one folk warred with another folk, when a single march took the warrior to the border, and a single fight settled the matter between the tiny peoples. But now that folk after folk had been absorbed in great kingdoms, now that the short march had lengthened into distant expeditions, the short fight into long campaigns, it was hard to reconcile the needs of labour and of daily bread with the needs of war. Ready as he might be to follow the king to a fight which ended the matter, the farmer who tilled his own farm could serve only as long as his home-needs would suffer him. Custom had fixed his service at a period of two months. But as the industrial condition of the country advanced such a service became more and

more difficult to enforce; even in Ine's day it was needful to fix heavy fines by law for men who "neglected the fyrd,"[1] and it broke down before the new conditions of warfare brought about by the strife with the Danes. However thoroughly they were beaten, the Danes had only to fall back behind their entrenchments, and wait in patience till the two months of the host's service were over, and the force which besieged them melted away. It was this which had again and again neutralized the successes of the West-Saxon kings. It was the thinning of their own ranks in the hour of victory which forced Æthelred to conventions such as that of Nottingham, and Ælfred to conventions such as that of Exeter. The Dane in fact had changed the whole conditions of existing warfare. His forces were really standing armies, and a standing army of some sort was needed to meet them.

The thegn-class.

It was to provide such a force that the kings, from Ælfred to Æthelstan, gave a new extension to the class of thegns.[2] The growth of this class had formed, as we have seen, a marked part of the social revolution which had preceded the Danish wars. But a fresh importance had been given to the thegn by the shock which the structure of society had received from the long struggle. The free ceorl had above all felt the stress of war; in

[1] Ine's Law; Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 134-5.
[2] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 220 et seq.

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

his need of a protector he was beginning to waive freedom for safety, and to "commend" himself to a thegn who would fight for him on condition that he followed his new "lord" as his "man" to the field. On the other hand, the lands wasted by the Danes were repeopled for the most part by the rural nobles, who provided the settlers with cattle and implements of culture, and in turn received service from them.[1] So rapid was this process that the class of free ceorls seems to have become all but extinguished, while that of thegns in its various degrees—king's thegn, the "baron" of the later feudalism; middle thegn, a predecessor of the country knight; and lesser thegn, or all who possessed "soke," or private jurisdiction within their lands[2]—came to include the bulk of the landowners. The warlike temper of the thegnhood, its military traditions, its dependence on the king at whose summons it was bound to appear in the host, above all, its wealth, enabled it to bring to the field a force well equipped and provided with resources for a campaign; and it was with a sound instinct that Ælfred and his house seized on it as the nucleus of a new military system.

The new army.

Its special recognition as a leading element in our social organization belongs most probably to

[1] Cod. Dip. 1089. See Robertson's remarks, "Hist. Essays," Intr. p. liv. note.

[2] Cnut's Laws, sec. 72. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 415.

his days or to those of his son; and a law which we may look upon as part at least of the king's reforms gave the class of thegns at once a wide military extension by subjecting all owners of five hides of land to thegn service.[1] By a development of the same principle, which we find established in later times, but whose origin we may fairly look for here, the whole country was divided into military districts, each five hides sending an armed man at the king's summons, and providing him with victuals and pay. Each borough, too, was rated as one or more such districts, and sent its due contingent, from one soldier to twelve. While this organization furnished the solid nucleus of a well-armed and permanent force, the duty of every freeman to join the host remained binding as before. But a simple reform met some at least of the difficulties which had as yet neutralized its effectiveness. On the resumption of the war we find that Ælfred had reorganized this national force by dividing the fyrd into two halves, each of which took by turns its service in the field, while the other half was exempted from field-service on condition of defending its own burhs and manning the rough entrenchments round every township.[2]

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws and Inst.," i. 191. "If a ceorl thrived so that he had fully five hides of his own land, church and kitchen, bell-house and 'burh'-gate-seat, and special duty in the king's hall, then was he thenceforth of thane-right worthy." Compare the "North Peoples' Law," secs. 5 and 9, *ibid.* pp. 187, 189.

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 894.

A garrison and reserve force was thus added to the army on service; and the attendance of its warriors in the field could be more rigorously enforced.

Creation of a navy.

Further than this it was impossible to go. But the results of the new system were seen when the war broke out again in later years. The balance of warlike effectiveness passed from the invaders to the West Saxons. The fyrd became an army. In the skilful choice of positions, in the use of entrenchments, in rapidity of marching as well as in the shock of the battlefield, the Danes found themselves face to face with men who had patiently learned to be their match. The reorganization of the fyrd however was only a part of the task of military reform which Ælfred set himself. Alone among the rulers of his time he saw that the battle with the pirates must really be fought out upon the sea. Clear them from the land as he might, safety was impossible while every inch of blue water which washed the English coast was the northman's realm. But to win the sea was a harder task than to win back the land. Ælfred had only to organize the national army; he had to create a national fleet. It was not indeed that Englishmen had ever lost their love for the sea; fishers and coasters abounded from the first along the Northumbrian shore, and ports such as Yarmouth and London can hardly have depended for traffic on foreign shipping. That no mention is made in

earlier times of a "ship-fyrd," or assessment for the equipment of a fleet, is due to the fact that the struggles of early England had as yet been land struggles within the bounds of the country itself; but on the first outbreak of a foreign war, the war of Ecgfrith with Ireland, the Irish coast was ravaged by a fleet which must have been raised through a public contribution and manned by sailors accustomed to stormy seas.[1] In the south indeed no English navy seems to have existed during the earlier period of the northern attacks. The seizure of Wareham, however, spurred Ælfred to create a fleet.[2] He built larger ships than had as yet been used for warfare; and though forced by the greater skill of the northmen in sea matters to man his vessels with "pirates" from Friesland, their action did much to decide the fate of Exeter. This naval force was steadily developed.[3] In Ælfred's later years his fleet was strong enough to encounter the pirate-ships of the East Anglians; and in the reign of his son an English force of a hundred vessels asserted its mastery of the Channel.[4]

[1] A.D. 684. Bæda, H. E. lib. iv. c. 26. (A. S. C.)

[2] Asser, a. 877 (ed. Wise, p. 29):—"Jussit cymbas et galeas, id est, longas naves fabricari per regnum."

[3] See Eng. Chron. a. 897.

[4] We can hardly attribute to Ælfred the law that we find in force in Eadgar's day, by which a ship was due from every three hundreds, probably of the coast-shires; but some such law there must have been to account for Eadward's fleet.

CHAP. VI. Ælfred. 878-901.

Ælfred and public justice.

A work of even greater difficulty than the reorganization of fyrd or fleet was the reorganization of public justice. Here Ælfred's efforts again fell in with the silent revolution which was undoing the older institutions of the English race. The change in the character and conception of the kingship, which was being brought about by the consolidation of the peoples into a single monarchy, as well as by the new tie of personal allegiance which bound men to the "lord of the land," was bringing with it a corresponding modification in the notions of justice and local government. The "peace of the folk" was becoming more and more, both in feeling and in fact, "the king's peace,"[1] while public justice was more and more conceived of as emanating from the power and action of the sovereign, rather than as a right inherent in the community itself. That this change of sentiment was of far older date than Ælfred's time we see from the language of the king. The conception of justice as inherent in the local jurisdictions or as flowing from the will of the people has wholly vanished. In Ælfred's mind justice flows to every court from the king himself, of whose judicial power each is representative, and who, as the fountain and source of justice, was bound on appeal to correct or confirm the judgement of all. "It is by gift from God and from me," he says to all who claim jurisdiction, "that you occupy your

[1] See Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 208-212.

office and rank."[1] Not only did an appeal lie to him personally from every court, but we find him exercizing this jurisdiction through delegated judges, in whose action we see the first traces of the judicial authority of the Royal Council. "All the law dooms of his land that were given in his absence he used to keenly question, of whatever sort they were, just or unjust; and if he found any wrongdoing in them he would call the judges themselves before him, and either by his own mouth or by some other of his faithful men seek out why they gave doom so unrighteous, whether through ignorance or ill-will, or for love or from hate of any, or for greed of gold."[2] The law was in fact now the king's law: offences against it are offences against the king; and contempt of its courts is contempt of the king.[3]

Ælfred's difficulties.

This new conception of justice received a powerful impulse from the growing inefficiency of the "folk's justice" itself. Ælfred's main work, like that of his successor, was to enforce submission to the justice of hundred-moot and

1 "Dei dono et meo sapientium ministerium et gradus usurpastis," Asser (ed. Wise), p. 70.

2 Asser (ed. Wise), p. 70: "Nam omnia pene totius suæ regionis judicia, quæ in absentiâ suâ fiebant, sagaciter investigabat, qualia fierent, justa aut etiam injusta; aut vero si aliquam in illis judiciis iniquitatem intelligere posset, leniter advocatos illos ipsos judices, aut per se ipsum, aut per alios suos fideles quoslibet, interrogabat," etc.

3 "Ofer-hyrnesse;" first heard of in Ll. Eadw. I. sec. i. (Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. p. 161), and so dating from Ælfred's day.

shire-moot alike on noble and ceorl, "who were constantly at obstinate variance with one another in the folk-moots before caldorman and reeve, so that hardly any one of them would grant that to be true doom that had been judged for doom by the caldorman and reeves."[1] But even the doom of the folk-moot was subject on appeal to the justice of the king.[2] Judicial business, in fact, occupied a large part of Ælfred's time. He was busied, says his biographer, "day and night" in the correction of local injustice, "for in that whole kingdom the poor had no helpers, or few, save the king himself."[3] The work was one which brought with it bitter resistance, and the strife even with men of his own house for law and justice left pain and disappointment in Ælfred's heart. "Desirest thou power?" he asks in one of his writings. "But thou shalt never obtain it without sorrow, sorrow from strange folk, and yet keener sorrows from thine own kindred."[4] "Hardship and sorrow!" he breaks out again; "not a king but would wish

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 69. "Nobilium et ignobilium . . . qui sæpissime in concionibus comitum et præpositorum pertinacissime inter se dissentiebant, ita ut pene nullus eorum quicquid a comitibus et præpositis judicatum fuisset, verum esse concederet." As Stubbs ("Const. Hist." i. 112, note) points out, this shows "that caldorman and gerefa, eorl and ceorl, had their places in these courts," and that, "although the officers might declare the law, the ultimate determination rested in each case with the suitors."

[2] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 70.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 69.

[4] Ælfred's Boethius, in Sharon Turner's "Hist. Anglo-Sax." vol. ii. p. 43.

to be without these if he could. But I know that he cannot."[1]

Gloom or anxiety however failed even for a moment to check his activity in the work of restoration.[2] He was as busy without Wessex as within. In the division of Britain at the peace of Wedmore he had saved from the grasp of the Danes the western portion of the Mercian kingdom, the upper valleys of the Thames and the Trent, the whole valley of the Severn with the outlier of the Hwiccan territory in Arden, and the more northerly region of our Shropshire and Cheshire. Of what vital importance this tract was to prove we shall see in the after part of our story. It was from it that Ælfred drew the teachers who began the intellectual and religious restoration of the rescued realm. It was from it that his daughter

[1] Ælfred's Boethius, in Sharon Turner's "Hist. Anglo-Sax." vol. ii. p. 45.

[2] Later tradition (Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. p. 186) attributed to Ælfred the institution of the shire, the hundred, and the tithing; and Professor Stubbs ("Const. Hist." i. 112) suggests a real ground for this. "The West-Saxon shires appear in history under their permanent names, and with a shire organization much earlier than those of Mercia and Northumberland; while Kent, Essex, and East Anglia had throughout an organization derived from their old status as kingdoms. It is in Wessex, further, that the hundredal division is supplemented by that of the tithing. It may then be argued that the whole hundredal system radiates from the West-Saxon kingdom, and that the variations mark the gradual extension of that power as it won its way to supremacy under Egbert or Ethelwulf, or recovered territory from the Danes under Alfred and Edward, Athelstan, Edmund, Edred, and Edgar. If this be allowed, the claim of Alfred, as founder, not of the hundred-law, but of the hundredal divisions, may rest on something firmer than legend."

CHAP. VI. Ælfred. 878-901.

in later days advanced to the conquest of Mid-Britain. It was of more immediate value as parting the Welshmen from the Danes, and thus paving the way for that complete reduction of the former which was the necessary prelude to any effective struggle with the settlers of the Danelaw. But what immediately fronted the young king was the question of its government. The question was one of great moment, not only in its bearing on Mercia, but in its bearing on the future of England itself. The royal stocks, once the centres and representatives of the separate folks, were dying out one by one. In the earlier days of Ecgberht the only kings that retained political life were those of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex, with the tributary realms of East Anglia and of Kent. Of these the Kentish kings soon came to an end, while the strife over the succession in Northumbria sprang from the virtual extinction of its royal stock. But the action of Ecgberht even in the moment of his triumph showed that so long as the royal races existed at all any real union of the English peoples in one political body was practically impossible.

The Mercian caldormanry.

The difficulty indeed could hardly have been solved save by some violent shock; and the shock was given by the coming of the Danes. Before fifty years were over the royal houses of Northumbria, of East Anglia, of Mercia, were brought to an end. The two claimants to the northern

throne perished in the battle of York. The martyrdom of Eadmund closed the East-Anglian line; while that of Mercia ended in the flight of Burhred to Rome before the inroad of Guthrum. It was thus that the position of Ælfred differed radically from that of Ecgberht; for even had he wished to restore the mere supremacy over Mercia which Ecgberht had wielded, he had no royal house through which to restore it. He was driven in fact by the very force of things to be not merely a West-Saxon over-lord of Mercia, but a Mercian king. He made no attempt to fuse Mercia into Wessex; it remained a separate though dependent state with its Mercian witenagemot and Mercian ruler, Æthelred, who may have sprung from the stock of its older kings. But Æthelred was simply Ealdorman of the Mercians. Though Ælfred uses in his dealings with Mercia only the general title of "King," it was as King of the Mercians that he acted; their Ealdorman owned him as his lord, and their Witan met by his licence. How thoroughly Ælfred asserted royal rights in Mid-Britain may be seen indeed from his Mercian coinage. Coinage in the old world was the unquestioned test of kingship, and a mint which Ælfred set up at Oxford [1]

[1] "We have in the British Museum," Mr. Barclay V. Head has been good enough to write to me, "a whole series of Ælfred's coins, struck at various mints, and among them are some discovered some twenty or thirty years ago at Cuerdale, which read 'ORSNAFORDA.' It is usual to attribute these

within the borders of the Mercian Ealdormanry proves even more than the submissive words of Witan or Ealdorman the reality of his rule. In fact Wessex and Mercia were now united, as Wessex and Kent had long been united, by their allegiance to the same ruler; and the foundation of a national monarchy was laid in the personal loyalty of Jute and Engle and Saxon alike to the house of Cerdic.[1]

to Oxford." On a subsequent personal examination however he finds that the word has been misread, and is clearly "OKSNAFORDA," which must be taken as the earliest authentic form of the town's name. No written evidence for Oxford's existence can be found before its mention in the Chronicle in 912 in the following reign.

[1] We find Æthelred an Ealdorman under Burhred, c. 872-4 (Kemb. Cod. Dipl. 304). His first extant charter under Ælfred is of 880, as "dux et patricius gentis Merciorum," and already married to Æthelflæd, who signs it. In 884 he signs as "Merciorum gentis ducatum gubernans" (Cod. Dip. 1066); in 888 as "procurator in dominio regni Merciorum" (*ib.* 1068). The grant of 880 is "cum licentiâ et impositione manus Ælfredi regis, una cum testimonio et consensu seniorum ejusdem gentis (Merciorum)." "Ælfred rex" signs first, then "Æthered dux," then "Æthelflæd conjunx" (Cod. Dip. 311). Another grant in 883 is with Ælfred's "leave and witness" (*ib.* 313). And so, in 896, when Æthelred summons the Mercian Witan, "that did he with king Ælfred's witness and leave" (*ib.* 1073). In a charter however of 901 (Cod. Dip. 330), Ælfred's last year of reign, there is no mention of Ælfred, but of "Æthered Æd(elflædque) dei gratiâ monarchiam Merciorum tenentes honorificeque gubernantes et defendentes;" the grant is made solely "cum licentiâ et testimonio pantorum procerum Merciorum;" and signed "Ego Æthered, Ego Æthelflæd," without titles. This does not however represent a new position taken by Æthelred at Ælfred's death and Eadward's accession, though it is notable that Æthelweard, a. 894 (lib. iv. c. 3), calls him "rex," for in 903 we find a Mercian ealdorman asking a grant from "Eadwardum regem, Æthelredum quoque et Æthelfledam, qui tunc principatum et potestatem gentis Merciæ sub prædicto rege tenuerunt" (Cod. Dip. 1081).

Ælfred's laws.

Important as was the union of Wessex and Mercia in itself as a step towards national unity, it led to a step yet more important in the fusion of the customary codes of the English peoples into a common law. The sphere of the written codes might be narrow in relation to the whole body of customary law, but they had by Ælfred's day come to be regarded as its representatives, and thus to be specially representative of the tribal life which the customary law embodied. As king therefore of Wessex, of Kent, and of Mercia, Ælfred found himself an administrator of three separate codes, whose differences, however slight, reflected the distinctions which held each of these states apart from the other. Of a new legislation, or of the bringing a larger sphere of English life within the scope of the written law, the king had no thought. The very notion of new legislation indeed, ungrounded on custom, was without hold on him or his people. "I durst not," he says frankly, "venture to set down in writing much of my own, for it was unknown to me what of it would please those who should come after us." All that he could venture on was a certain amount of rejection; "many of those dooms which seemed to me not good, I rejected them by the counsel of my witan;" but the main work was simply a work of compilation.[1] "Those things which I met

[1] Of the seventy-seven clauses of Ælfred's law, fifty-three relate to personal injuries; these are taken from the Kentish

with, either of the days of Ine, my kinsman, or of Offa, king of the Mercians, or of Æthelberht, who first among the English race received baptism, those which seemed to me the rightest, those I have gathered together and rejected the others."[1] But unpretending as the work might seem, its importance was great. With it began the conception of a national law. The notion of separate systems of tribal customs passed away with the weakening of the notion of tribal life; and the codes of Wessex, Mercia, and Kent blended in the doom-book of a common England.

The Danes in Frankland.

The king's work of peace, however, was now drawing to an end. We have seen how anxiously, while girding himself for the coming strife, Ælfred was looking out through these six years of quiet, from 878 to 884, over the West-Saxon frontier.[2] What helped him to give rest to his land—as he knew well—was not only the peace of Wedmore, but the work which the pirates had found to do on the other side of the Channel; for their defeat in England had thrown them back on

codes, especially that of Æthelberht, with but slight change save in the amount of the fine. The rest are mainly borrowed from Ine, whose agricultural laws however are wholly omitted; and there are a few miscellaneous laws, which may be Ælfred's own, or taken from the lost code of Offa.

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws and Instit." i. 59.

[2] Among other causes for anxiety was the desertion of Englishmen to the Danes. In Cod. Dip. 1078, we hear of an ealdorman, Wulfhere, who "suum dominum regem Ælfredum et patriam, ultra jusjurandum quam regi et suis omnibus optimatibus juraverat, dereliquit." This is a very early instance of the oath of allegiance.

their old field of attack in the land of the Franks. The establishment of the Danelaw gave them a base of operations for descents on the opposite coast,[1] and when the host under Guthrum sailed home to East Anglia after its repulse from Wessex, it was in order to sail off again to the Scheldt. The close of the struggle in England threw in fact the whole weight of the pirate onset on the Franks. It fell above all on northern Frankland, and soon the Scheldt, the Meuse, and the Rhine were full of pirate squadrons. The Frank kings fought bravely as of old, though their strength was still broken by the dynastic quarrels which the dream of restoring the empire of Charles the Great stirred up perpetually among his descendants. But the resistance of Wessex roused a new vigour among its neighbours. Lewis the German fought the pirates hard on the Scheldt, while two grandsons of Charles the Bald, Lewis and Carloman, who mounted the throne of the West Franks in the year after the peace of Wedmore, checked Guthrum by a victory at Saucourt on the Somme. The contest however drew larger hosts to Guthrum's aid, and an overpowering force poured up the Rhine and harried Lorraine as far as Aachen. Lewis the German and Lewis of the West Franks alike passed away in this hour of gloom, while Carloman, still battling with the pirate host as it poured from Aachen over western Frankland, died in 884.

[1] Eng. Chron. 880-4.

CHAP. IV.
Ælfred.
878-901.

Their attack on England.

But the hard fighting told. The old ease with which the northmen passed from land to land as resistance drove them to seek fresh ground for their forays was coming fast to an end. On both sides of the sea their hosts found men ready to meet blow with blow. When the pirates who had quitted the Loire steered for Wessex, Ælfred's new fleet was ready for them; and a brisk engagement, in which four of their ships were sunk or captured, drove them from the coast.[1] The bulk of their hosts, who had followed Hasting to northern Frankland, had to fight a stubborn fight at Haslo against the Emperor Charles. Before blows such as these the Wikings were driven to draw their whole force together, and in 884 the fleet of the northmen was concentrated in the Somme. To rest idle however was to starve, and part of their host soon moved to Lorraine, while part pushed up the Thames and beset Rochester.[2] But the old days of panic were over, and Rochester held bravely out till Ælfred could hurry to its relief and drive its besiegers to the sea with the loss of their horses.[3] Short as the campaign had been, it was to have important results. Though the repulse of the pirates had been quick enough to hinder a general rising of the Danelaw in their aid, the Danes of Guthrum's kingdom had already

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 882.
[2] *Ibid.* 885.
[3] "Equis, quos de Francia secum adduxerant."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 37. This shows the size of their ships.

set aside the Frith of Wedmore and given help to their brethren.[1] No sooner, therefore, had the pirate-force retreated from Rochester than West-Saxon ships from Kent appeared off the East-Anglian coast to punish this breach of faith. A squadron of the freebooters was captured at the mouth of the Stour, and its crews slain. The insult was avenged by a sudden and successful rally of the East Anglians in which the king's ships were destroyed, but the measures which Ælfred took in the next year show that the rally was followed by submission, and that a fresh peace had been made between the combatants on terms that implied Guthrum's recognition of the superior strength of the West-Saxon king.

Ælfred and London.

The Essex which the Danes had occupied till now as a dependency of their East-Anglian realm must have been the older kingdom of the East Saxons, a tract which included not only the modern shire that bears their name, but our Middlesex and Hertfordshire, and whose centre, or "mother-city," was London. London had as yet played little part in English history; indeed for nearly half a century after its conquest by the East Saxons it wholly disappears from our view. Its position, however, was such that traffic could not long fail to re-create the town, and the advantages which had drawn trade and population to the Roman Londinium must have already been at work in repeopling the

[1] Æthelweard, a. 885, lib. iv. c. 3.

English London. Its growth however was for a while to be arrested; for the conquest of the town by Ecgberht in his general reunion of the English states was quickly followed by the struggle with the Danes. To London the war brought all but ruin; so violent in fact was the shock to its life that its very bishoprick seemed for a time to cease to exist.[1] The Roman walls must have been broken and ruined, for we hear of no resistance such as that which in later days made the city England's main bulwark against northern attack; and in 851 it was plundered by the marauders, who again wintered at Fulham in 880, when the city was probably subjected anew to their devastations. At the peace of Wedmore it must have been left like the rest of Essex in the hands of Guthrum. But with the war of 886 came its deliverance, for at the close of the strife with East Anglia we find London in Ælfred's hands. Whether he had won it by actual siege or no,[2] he "peopled" or "settled" it, and handed it over to the Mercian ealdorman Æthelred to hold against the Danes.

The division of Essex.

The cession of London, however, was only part of the sacrifice by which Guthrum won peace.

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 275.

[2] "Obsidetur a rege Ælfredo urbs Lundonii," says Æthelweard; but Earle ("Parallel Chron." p. 310) argues that this is a mere misconception of the Chron. a. 886, "gesette Ælfred cyning Lundenburg," Æthelweard substituting "besette" for "gesette," "besieged" for "colonized" or "peopled." All the later authorities follow the Chronicle, or Asser's "restauravit et habitabilem fecit."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 52.

The geographical boundaries which it names show that the "Frith between Ælfred and Guthrum," which has commonly been identified with the Frith concluded at Wedmore, is really the peace of 886; and that its provisions represent a territorial re-adjustment by which East Anglia bought peace from the king. The older Essex was broken into two parts by an artificial line of demarcation between Guthrum's realm and the Mercian ealdormanry, a line which passed from the Thames up the Lea as far as its sources near Hertford, thence struck straight over the Chilterns, and down their slopes into the valley of the Ouse at Bedford, and thence followed the countless bends of Ouse to the point where its course was cut by the line of the Watling Street near Stony Stratford.[1] In other words, the western half of the East-Saxon kingdom was torn away from the eastern half to form a district around London.[2] The division may be but the return to

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 153. At this point where the line hit the Watling Street the territories of Guthrum and Mercia ceased to march together, and it was therefore needless further to define the boundaries of either. But the border-line refers strictly to these two realms; and the common reading of it, 'as if from this point Watling Street formed the bound between the rest of the Danelaw, *i.e.* the territory of the Five Boroughs and Mercia, has no foundation in the actual text of the frith. There must have been a separate frith between the Five Boroughs and English Mercia, no doubt with a like definition of the boundary line, as there was certainly such a frith between Wessex and Northumbria (Eng. Chron. a. 911), but both are lost.

[2] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 5, says of London, "Quæ est sita in aquilonari ripa Tamesis fluminis, in confinio East-Seaxum, et Middle-Seaxum, sed tamen ad East-Seaxum illa civitas cum

an earlier arrangement; for some such parting must have taken place when Ecgberht joined Essex to his "eastern kingdom" of Kent, while London was still left in Mercian hands. This arrangement however was so soon put an end to by the reunion of London and Essex in the kingdom of Guthrum, that it would have left hardly a trace of its existence but for the permanent severance which was now made by the Frith of 886. It was this which gave both territories the shape which they still retain, which fixed the border of Essex at the Lea, and annexed to London that district, which from its position between West Saxon and East Saxon, either now or at some earlier time, was known as the land of the Middlesexe.

Position of the Danes reversed.

In a military point of view the recovery of the Thames valley, with the winning and fortification of London, was of great moment, for it closed to the Danes that water-way by which in past times the pirates had advanced to the attack of Wessex. Its military results however proved to be the least results of the war. Till now Ælfred's victories had seemed a mere saving of Wessex, a temporary repulse of the Dane from a part of Britain.

veritate pertinet." It may be doubted whether "Middle-Sexe" were heard of before this assignment of the old East-Saxon borderland as a "Pagus" for London in 886, when the need arose for a distinguishing name for its inhabitants. I shall however deal afterwards with the bearing of this division on the general question of the "shires"; here we need only note that the question has hardly arisen, as the line of the Frith is far from representing the later lines of the shires along its course.

But the character of the war, as it reopened in 885, showed how much greater a work than this had been done at Athelney and Edington. With the Frith of Wedmore the whole military position of the Danes had in fact been reversed. From an attitude of attack they had been thrown back on an attitude of defence. The northmen had failed to crush the house of Cerdic, and already it seemed as if the house of Cerdic was turning to crush the northmen. The driving off of the pirates, the attack on East Anglia, the recovery of London and the lands about it, showed England that in Wessex and its king the country possessed a force not only strong enough to withstand the Danes, but strong enough to take in hand the undoing of what the Danes had done.

Rise of national sentiment.

The consciousness of such a change at once made itself felt. If any date can be given for the foundation of a national monarchy, as distinct from the earlier supremacy of king over king, it is the year 886. In that year, says the Chronicle, "all the Angel-cyn turned to Ælfred, save those that were under bondage to Danish men."[1] The old tribal jealousies were, if not destroyed, at least subordinated to the sense of a common patriotism, and a sense of national existence began from this moment to give life and vigour to the new conception of a national sovereignty. If the Dane had struck down the dominion of Ecgberht, it was the

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 886.

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

Dane who was to bring about even more than its restoration. Set face to face with a foreign foe, the English people was waking to a consciousness of its own existence; the rule of the stranger was crushing provincial jealousies and deepening the sense of a common nationality; while the question of political and military supremacy was settled as it had never been settled before. Wessex alone had repulsed the Dane. The West Saxons had not only kept their own freedom; they had become the only possible champions of the freedom of other Englishmen. The old jealousy of their greatness was lost in a craving for their aid, for it was plain that deliverance from the invader, if it came at all, must come through the sword of the West-Saxon king. It was no wonder then that the eyes of Northumbrian and Mercian turned more and more to Ælfred, or that his work gleamed over England like a light of hope. His slow patient undoing of the evil which the Danes had done in Wessex was a promise of its undoing throughout the nation at large.

Intellectual ruin of England.

But if the growth of this sentiment gave a moral strength to Ælfred's position, the sentiment itself gained largeness and dignity from the conception of national rule which it found embodied in the king. Hardly had this second breathing-space been won in the long conflict with the enemy than Ælfred turned anew to his work of restoration. The ruin that the Danes had wrought

had been no mere material ruin. When they first appeared off her shores, England stood in the forefront of European culture; her scholars, her libraries, her poetry, had no rivals in the western world. But all, or nearly all, of this culture had disappeared. The art and learning of North-umbria had been destroyed at a blow; and throughout the rest of the Danelaw the ruin was as complete. The very Christianity of Mid-Britain was shaken; the sees of Dunwich and Lindsey came to an end; at Lichfield and Elmham the succession of bishops became broken and irregular; even London hardly kept its bishop's stool. But its letters and civilization were more than shaken; they had vanished in the sack of the great abbeys of the Fen. Even in Wessex, which ranked as the least advanced of the English kingdoms, Ælfred could recall that he saw as a child "how the churches stood filled with treasures and books, and there was also a great multitude of God's servants;" but this was "before it had all been ravaged and burned."[1] "So clean was learning decayed among English folk," says the king, "that very few were there on this side Humber that could understand their rituals in English, or translate aught out of Latin into English, and I

[1] "I remembered also how I saw, before it had all been ravaged and burned, how the churches throughout the whole of England stood filled with treasures and books, and there was also a great multitude of God's servants."—Pref. to Ælfred's translation of Gregory's Pastoral (ed. Sweet).

ween there were not many beyond the Humber. So few of them were there, that I cannot bethink me of a single one south of Thames when I came to the kingdom."[1] It was in fact only in the fragment of Mercia which had been saved from the invaders that a gleam of the old intellectual light lingered in the school which Bishop Werfrith had gathered round him at Worcester.

Ælfred's intellectual work.

It is in his efforts to repair this intellectual ruin that we see Ælfred's conception of the work he had to do. The Danes had no doubt brought with them much that was to enrich the temper of the coming England, a larger and freer manhood, a greater daring, a more passionate love of personal freedom, better seamanship and a warmer love of the sea, a keener spirit of traffic, and a range of trade-ventures which dragged English commerce into a wider world. But their work of destruction threatened to rob England of things even more precious than these. In saving Wessex Ælfred had saved the last refuge of all that we sum up in the word civilization, of that sense of a common citizenship and nationality, of the worth of justice and order and good government, of the harmony of individual freedom in its highest form with the general security of society, of the need for a co-operation of every moral and intellectual force in the development both of the individual man and of the people as a whole, which England had

[1] Pref. to Pastoral (ed. Sweet).

for two centuries been either winning from its own experience or learning from the tradition of the past. It was because literature embodied what was worthiest in this civilization that Ælfred turned to the restoration of letters. He sought in Mercia for the learning that Wessex had lost.[1] He made the Mercian Plegmund Archbishop of Canterbury;[2] Werfrith, Bishop of Worcester, helped him in his own literary efforts, and two Mercian priests, Æthelstan and Werwulf, became his chaplains and tutors. But it was by example as well as precept that the king called England again to the studies it had abandoned. "What of all his troubles troubled him the most," he used to say, "was that when he had the age and ability to learn he could find no masters." But now that masters could be had he worked day and night.[3] He stirred nowhere without having some scholar by him. He remained true indeed to his own tongue and his own literature. His memory was full of English songs, as he had caught them from singers' lips; and he was not only fond of repeating them but taught them carefully to his children.[4]

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 46.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Peterborough), a. 890.

[3] "Die noctuque, quandocunque aliquam licentiam haberet, libros ante se recitare talibus imperabat, non enim unquam sine aliquo eorum se esse pateretur, quapropter pene omnium librorum notitiam habebat, quamvis per seipsum aliquid adhuc de libris intelligere non posset; non enim adhuc aliquid legere inceperat."—Asser (ed Wise), p. 46.

[4] "Et Saxonicos libros recitare, et maxime Saxonica carmina memoriter discere, aliis imperare, et solus assidue pro viribus

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

But he knew that the actual knowledge of the world must be sought elsewhere. Before many years were over he had taught himself Latin,[1] and was soon skilled enough in it to render Latin books into the English tongue.

Asser.

His wide sympathy sought for aid in this work from other lands than his own. "In old time," the king wrote sadly,[2] "men came hither from foreign lands to seek for instruction; and now, if we are to have it, we can only get it from abroad." He sought it among the West Franks and the East Franks; Grimbald came from St. Omer to preside over the new abbey he founded at Winchester, while John the Old Saxon was fetched, it may be from the Westphalian abbey of Corbey, to rule the

studiosissime non desinebat." -Asser (ed. Wise), p. 43. His children, Eadward and Ælfthryth, were not left "sine liberali disciplina," "nam et psalmos et Saxonicos libros et maxime Saxonica carmina studiose didicere, et frequentissime libris utuntur."—*Ib.* p. 43. In the palace-school "utriusque linguæ libri, Latinæ scilicet et Saxonicæ assidue legebantur."—*Ib.* p. 43. So of his nobles, if any were too ignorant or old to profit by "liberalibus studiis," "Suum si haberet filium, aut etiam aliquem propinquum suum, vel etiam si aliter non habeat suum proprium hominem liberum vel servum, quem ad lectionem longe ante promoverat, libros ante se die nocteque quandocunque unquam ullam haberet licentiam Saxoncos imperabat recitare." —Asser (ed. Wise), p. 71. Stray references throughout his writings show his familiarity with the Old English hero-legends: "Where are now the bones of Weland?" he renders the "Fabricii ossa" of Boethius.

[1] Either in 885 or 887. See Pauli, "Life of Ælfred," p. 169. "Non enim adhuc legere inceperat," says Asser (ed. Wise), p. 46, apparently of the time soon after the Frith of Wedmore. I take "legere" to have its usual meaning, that of reading and translating Latin.

[2] Pref. to Pastoral Book.

monastery he set up at Athelney.[1] A Welsh bishop was drawn with the same end to Wessex; and the account he has left of his visit and doings at the court brings us face to face with the king. "In those days," says Bishop Asser, "I was called by the king from the western and furthest border of Britain and came to Saxon-land; and when in a long journey I set about approaching him I arrived in company with guides of that people as far as the region of the Saxons who lie on the right hand of one's road, which in the Saxon tongue is called Sussex. There for the first time I saw the king in the king's house which is named Dene. And when I had been received by him with all kindness, he began to pray me earnestly to devote myself to his service and be of his household, and to leave for his sake all that I possessed on the western side of Severn, promising to recompense me with greater possessions." Asser however refused to forsake his home, and Ælfred was forced to be content with a promise of his return six months after. "And when he seemed satisfied with this reply, I gave him my pledge to return in a given time, and after four days took horse again and set out on my return to my country. But after I had left him and reached the city of Winchester a dangerous fever laid hold of me, and for twelve months and a week I lay with little hope of life. And when at the set time I did

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 61.

not return to him as I had promised, he sent messengers to me to hasten my riding to him and seek for the cause of my delay. But as I could not take horse I sent another messenger back to him to show him the cause of my tarrying, and to declare that if I recovered from my infirmity I would fulfil the promise I had made. When my sickness then had departed, I devoted myself to the king's service on these terms, that I should stay with him for six months in every year if I could, or if not I should stay three months in Britain and three months in Saxon-land. So it came about that I made my way to him in the king's house which is called Leonaford, and was greeted by him with all honour. And that time I staid with him in his court through eight months, during which I read to him whatever books he would that we had at hand; for it is his constant wont, whatever be the hindrances either in mind or body, by day and by night, either himself to read books aloud or to listen to others reading them."[1]

Birth of English Prose.

The work, however, which most told upon English culture was done not by these scholars but by Ælfred himself. The king's aim was simple and practical. He desired that "every youth now in England that is freeborn and has wealth enough be set to learn, as long as he is not fit for any other occupation, till they well know

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), pp. 47-51.

how to read English writing; and let those be afterwards taught in the Latin tongue who are to continue learning and be promoted to a higher rank."[1] For this purpose he set up, like Charles the Great, a school for the young nobles at his own court.[2] Books were needed for them as well as for the priests, to the bulk of whom Latin was a strange tongue, and the king set himself to provide English books for these readers. It was in carrying out this simple purpose that Ælfred changed the whole front of English literature. In the paraphrase of Cadmon, in the epic of Beowulf, in the verses of Northumbrian singers, in battle-songs and ballads, English poetry had already risen to a grand and vigorous life. But English prose hardly existed. Since Theodore's time theology had been the favourite study of English scholars, and theology naturally took a Latin shape. Historical literature followed Bæda's lead in finding a Latin vehicle of expression.[3] Saints' lives, which had now become numerous, were as yet always written in Latin. It was from Ælfred's day that this tide of literary fashion suddenly turned. English prose started vigorously into life. Theology stooped to an English dress.[4] History became

[1] Pref. to Pastoral (ed. Sweet).

[2] Asser (ed. Wise), pp. 43, 44.

[3] "The charters anterior to Ælfred are invariably in Latin." —Palgrave, "Engl. Commonw." i. 56.

[4] From the time of Ælfred's version of "The Pastoral Book," religious works like Ælfric's Homilies are written in English. In this vernacular theology England stood alone.

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

almost wholly vernacular.[1] The translation of Latin saint-lives into English became one of the most popular literary trades of the day. Even medicine found English interpreters. A national literature in fact sprang suddenly into existence which was without parallel in the western world.[2]

Ælfred's translations.

It is thus that in the literatures of modern Europe that of England leads the way. The

[1] From the days of Ælfred to the eve of the Norman Conquest, when the "Vita Haroldi" forms an exception (for the Encomium Emmæ is hardly of English origin), we possess only a single Latin historian, the ealdorman Æthelweard.

[2] "The old English writers," says Mr. Sweet, "did not learn the art of prose composition from Latin models; they had a native historical prose, which shows a gradual elaboration and improvement, quite independent of Latin or any other foreign influence. This is proved by an examination of the historical pieces inserted into the Chronicle. The first of these, the account of the death of Cynewulf and Cynehard, is composed in the abrupt disconnected style of oral conversation: it shows prose composition in its rudest and most primitive form, and bears a striking resemblance to the earliest Icelandic prose. In the detailed narrative of Ælfred's campaign and sea-fights the style assumes a different aspect; without losing the force and simplicity of the earlier pieces, it becomes refined and polished to a high degree, and yet shows no traces of foreign influence. Accordingly, in the 'Orosius,' the only translation of Ælfred's which from the similarity of its subject admits of a direct comparison, we find almost exactly the same language and style as in the contemporary historical pieces of the Chronicle. In the Bede, where the ecclesiastical prevails over the purely historical, the general style is less national, less idiomatic than in the 'Orosius,' and in purely theological works, such as the 'Pastoral,' the influence of the Latin original reaches its height. Yet even here there seems to be no attempt to engraft Latin idioms on the English version; the foreign influence is only indirect, chiefly showing itself in the occasional clumsiness that results from the difficulty of expressing and defining abstract ideas in a language unused to theological and metaphysical subtleties."—Introduction to Pastoral Book (E. E. Text Soc.), p. xli.

Romance tongues, the tongues of Italy, Gaul, and Spain, were only just emerging into definite existence when Ælfred wrote. Ulfilas, the first Teutonic prose writer, found no successors among his Gothic people; and none of the German folk across the sea were to possess a prose literature of their own for centuries to come. English therefore was not only the first Teutonic literature, it was the earliest prose literature of the modern world. And at the outset of English literature stands the figure of Ælfred. The mighty roll of books that fills our libraries opens with the translations of the king. He took his books as he found them; they were in fact the popular manuals of his day; the compilation of "Orosius," which was then the one accessible hand-book of universal history, the works of Bæda, the "Consolation" of Boethius, the Pastoral Book of Pope Gregory. "I wondered greatly," he says, "that of those good men who were aforetime all over England and who had learned perfectly these books, none would translate any part into their own language. But I soon answered myself and said, 'They never thought that men would be so reckless, and learning so fallen.'" As it was, however, the books had to be rendered into English by the king himself, with the help of the scholars he had gathered round him. "When I remembered," he says in his preface to the Pastoral Book,[1] "how the knowledge of

[1] Ælfred's Pastoral Book (ed. Sweet).

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

Latin had formerly decayed throughout England, and yet many could read English writing, I began among other various and manifold troubles of this kingdom, to translate into English the book which is called in Latin Pastoralis, and in English Shepherd's Book, sometimes word by word, and sometimes according to the sense, as I had learnt it from Plegmund my archbishop, and Asser my bishop, and Grimbald my mass-priest, and John my mass-priest. And when I had learnt it as I could best understand it, and as I could most clearly interpret it, I translated it into English."

Their character.

Ælfred was too wise a man not to own the worth of such translations in themselves. The Bible, he urged with his cool common sense, had told on the nations through versions in their own tongues. The Greeks knew it in Greek. The Romans knew it in Latin. Englishmen might know it, as they might know the other great books of the world, in their own English. "I think it better therefore to render some books, that are most needful for men to know, into the language that we may all understand." But Ælfred showed himself more than a translator. He became an editor for his people. Here he omitted, there he expanded. He enriched his first translation, the "Orosius," by a sketch of new geographical discoveries in the north. He gave a West-Saxon form to his selections from Bæda. In one place he stops to explain his theory of government, his

wish for a thicker population, his conception of national welfare as consisting in a due balance of the priest, the thegn, and the churl. The mention of Nero spurs him to an outbreak against abuses of power. The cold acknowledgment of a Providence by Boethius gives way to an enthusiastic acknowledgment of the goodness of God.[1] As Ælfred writes his large-hearted nature flings off its royal mantle, and he talks as a man to men. "Do not blame me," he prays with a charming simplicity, "if any know Latin better than I, for every man must say what he says and do what he does according to his ability."[2]

The English Chronicle.

Among his earliest undertakings was an English version of Bæda's history;[3] and it was probably the making of this version which suggested the thought of a work which was to be memorable in our literature.[4] Winchester, like most other episcopal monasteries, seems to have had its own Bishop's Roll, a series of meagre and irregular annals in the Latin tongue, for the most part mere jottings of the dates when West-Saxon bishop and

[1] See the instances given from his "Boethius" by Sharon Turner, "Hist. Ang. Sax." ii. cap. 2.

[2] Pref. to the "Boethius," Pauli's Ælfred, p. 174.

[3] Pauli ("Life of Ælfred," p. 180) shows that the Bæda must have preceded the English rendering of the Chronicle, as this follows the version of Bæda in one of its most characteristic blunders.

[3] In this sketch of the earlier history of the English Chronicle I have mainly followed Mr. Earle ("Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel," 1865, Introduction), whose minute analysis has placed the question of its composition on a critical basis.

West-Saxon King mounted throne and bishop-stool. The story of this Roll and its aftergrowths has been ingeniously traced by modern criticism; and the general conclusions at which it has arrived seem probable enough. The entries of the Roll were posted up at uncertain intervals and with more or less accuracy from the days of the first West-Saxon bishop, Birinus. Meagre as they were, these earlier annals were historical in character and free from any mythical intermixture; but save for a brief space in Ine's day they were purely West-Saxon,[1] and with the troubles which followed Ine's death they came to an end altogether. It was not until the revival of West-Saxon energy under Ecgberht that any effort was made to take up the record again and to fill up the gap that its closing had made.[2] But Swithun was probably the first to begin the series of developments which transformed this Bishop's Roll into a national history; and the clerk to whom he entrusted its

[1] Earle finds a change in the Chronicle at 682. Ine reigned from 688. The annals still remained mere notes of the death and accession of kings and bishops, but were no longer confined to Wessex, including from this point like events in Northumbria, Mercia, and Kent (Earle, Intr. xi.). For the difficulties in the dates throughout this portion, from 682 to 755, see Stubbs's preface to his edition of "Roger of Hoveden," vol. i. pp. xxxv. et. seq.

[2] The meagre and irregular entries from 758, which Earle styles (Intr. xii.) "mere chronography, an ineffectual attempt to fill out the tale of years with corresponding events," may have been thrown together just after Ecgberht's accession, as there is a break in the genealogical preface that precedes them which suggests that it originally closed with Ecgberht's predecessor, Beorhtric.

compilation continued the Roll by a series of military and political entries to which we owe our knowledge of the reign of Æthelwulf, while he enlarged and revised the work throughout, prefixing to its opening those broken traditions of the coming of our fathers,[1] which, touched as they are here and there by mythical intermixture, remain the one priceless record of the conquest of Britain.[2]

Its growth under Ælfred.

It was this Latin chronicle of Swithun's clerk that Ælfred seems to have taken in hand about 887, and whose whole character he changed by giving it an English form.[3] In its earlier portions he carried still further the process of expansion. An introduction dating from the birth of Christ, drawn from the work of Bæda, was added to its opening, and entries from the same source were worked into the after-annals.[4] But it was where

[1] For the worth of these traditions, see Earle (Intr. ix. x.) and my "Making of England," i. 31, note.

[2] Though hardly attributable to Swithun's own pen, Mr. Earle (Intr. xiv.) has little doubt of the composition of this Chronicle "during his episcopate and at his see." The date of its compilation is shown by the "genealogical demonstration" (p. xii.) with which it closes at the death of Æthelwulf. So far as we can see the work was still in Latin.

[3] Pauli dates Ælfred's chronicle-work as "soon after 890" ("Life of Ælfred," 180, 191). Earle however shows the probability of 887 for the king's first compilation, as not only is there a distinct change in the character of the entries at this point, but Asser must have had in his hands a chronicle which ended in 887, the information he draws from that quarter ending in that year. (Earle, Intr. xv.)

[4] As far, that is, as Bæda goes, to 731. From 449 to 731, the entries for thirty-one years are wholly, and those for twelve more partially, drawn from Bæda.

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

Swithun's work ended that Ælfred's own work really began, for it is from the death of Æthelwulf that the Roll widens into a continuous narrative, a narrative full of life and originality, whose vigour and freshness mark the gift of a new power to the English tongue. The appearance of such a work in their own mother speech could not fail to produce a deep impression on the people whose story it told. With it English history became the heritage of the English people. Bæda had left it accessible merely to noble or priest; Ælfred was the first to give it to the people at large. Nor was this all. The tiny streams of historic record which had been dispersed over the country at large were from this time drawn into a single channel. The Chronicle, for from this time we may use the term by which the work has become famous, served even more than the presence of the Dane to put an end to the existence of distinct annals in Northumbria and Mercia,[1] and to help on the progress of national unity by reflecting everywhere the same national consciousness.

When his work on Bæda was finished Ælfred,

[1] Stubbs (Pref. to Hoveden, i. xi.) points out that its publication had possibly "the same effect on the previously existing materials and schemes of history that the publication of Higden's Polychronicon had in the fourteenth, and the invention of printing in the fifteenth centuries. It stopped the writing of new books, and insured the destruction of the old." To this cause he attributes the want of any distinctly Northumbrian history of the ninth century, in spite of the existence of scholars at York till after the invasion and settlement of the Danes.

it is thought, began his translation of the Consolation of Boethius; and it is not improbable[1] that the metrical translation of the Metra of Boethius was also from his hand. From philosophy and this effort at poetry he turned to give to his people a book on practical theology. As far as we know the translation of the Pastoral Rule of Pope Gregory was his last work; and of all his translations it was the most carefully done. It is only as we follow the king in the manifold activity of his life that we understand his almost passionate desire for that "stillness" which was essential to his work. But it was only by short spaces that the land was "still," and once more Ælfred's work of peace was to be broken off by a renewal of the old struggle. Five years indeed had passed since the last attack; but with the death of Guthrum-Æthelstan in 890[2] the king lost his hold on East Anglia; and though the frith between the two nations was not only renewed, but secured by the giving of hostages, Ælfred must have seen that it needed but a little aid from without to rouse the men of the Danelaw to a renewal of their attack on Wessex. And at this juncture the aid from without suddenly offered itself; for the fortunes of England were swayed by a revolution which was going on in the north.

Through the years that followed the Peace of

[1] "Geschichte der Englischen Litteratur," p. 101. Rd. ten Brink. (A. S. G.)

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 890.

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901. Harald Fair-hair.

Wedmore the movement towards unity which the northmen had furthered by their descents on the English peoples took a new vigour in their own homeland; the old isolation of fiord from fiord, and dale from dale, began to break down; and the little commonwealths which had held so jealously aloof from each other were drawn together whether they would or no. Great kingdoms thus grew up in each of the three regions of Scandinavia. Norway was the first to become a single monarchy. Legend told how one of its many rulers, Harald of Westfold, sent his men to bring him Gytha of Hordaland, a girl whom he had chosen for his wife; and how Gytha sent his men back again with taunts at the lord of so petty a realm. The taunts went home, and Harald swore "Never will I clip or comb my hair till I have mastered all Norway with scatt and dues and king's domains, or died in the trying."[1] So every springtide came war and hosting, harrying and burning, till in 883 a great fight at Hafursfiord settled the matter,[2] and Harald "Ugly Head," as men called him while the strife lasted, was free to shear his locks again, and became Harald Harfager, or "Fair-hair."[3]

[1] Harald Fair-hair's Saga, c. v. Laing's "Sea Kings," i. 274.

[2] *Ibid.* 287. A poem on the battle speaks of English and Scottish warriors and some from the Frankish coast as engaged in it. These were of course simply Wikings who had gathered from these quarters for the strife. The battle was partly decided by "the fierce stone-storm's pelting rain," which formed a marked feature in all northern fighting.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 292.

Invasion of Hasting.

The revolution gave fresh life to the pirate raids abroad, for the northmen loved no master, and a great multitude fled out of the country, some pushing as far as Iceland and colonizing it; some sailing southward and waging war against their new lord from the Orkneys and Shetlands.[1] From these haunts, however, Harald drove them at last, sweeping the coast as far as Man summer after summer,[2] and setting up an earldom in the Orkneys, which furnished a new base of operations against the kingdom of the Scots, while the sea-kings steered southward to join Guthrum's host in the Rhine-country, or Hasting in the Channel.[3] The impulse which the new-comers gave was sorely needed by the Wikings, for the bolder temper of Western Christendom was giving fresh vigour to the struggle against them. At the close of 891 the pirates were beaten by King Arnulf on the Dyle in a fight so decisive that they never after attempted to settle on German soil; and even Hasting, master as he still was of northern Frankland, saw his host worn out by the resolute attacks of King Odo. It was time to seek new fields, and famine quickened the sea-kings' resolve. In 893 a fleet of two hundred and fifty vessels gathered

[1] Harald Fair-hair's Saga, c. v. Laing's "Sea Kings," i. p. 288.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 291.

[3] If we follow the Saga, with Skene ("Celtic Scotland," i. 336, note, and 344, note), Hafursfiord may be dated in 883, and the Wikings' expulsion from the Orkneys, with the foundation of the earldom, had taken place before 893.

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

at Boulogne, and steering for the port of Lymne the pirates established themselves in the neighbouring Andredsweald;[1] while shortly after Hasting himself with eighty ships entered the Thames, and pushing up the Swale into northern Kent, formed his winter-camp at Milton.

Rising of the Danelaw.

In the spring of 894 they pushed their raids into Hampshire and Berkshire; but the success of their enterprise hung on the co-operation of the Danelaw. The compact with Ælfred however was still fresh, and the English Danes remained quiet,[2] while the king, who had detached his son Eadward with a small force to watch the pirate-host through the winter, and stationed ealdorman Æthelred within the walls of London to hold the line of the Thames, himself by skilful encampments held the two bodies of his assailants for a year at bay, and prisoned them within the bounds of the Weald. For a while the king had hopes of ending the war by a new treaty such as that of Wedmore. Hasting swore to refrain from further ravages, and confirmed his oath by giving hostages, and suffering his two boys to be baptized;[3] but the negotiations were a mere blind, and the good faith

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 893. The "Mickle wood, that we call Andred, was from east to west a hundred and twelve miles long or longer, and thirty miles broad."

[2] After the landing of Hasting "Northumbrians and East-Engle had given oaths to Ælfred, and the East-Engle six hostages" (Eng. Chron. a. 894). This however did not hinder them from joining the Danes, though not as yet in any general fashion.

[3] Æthelweard, a. 894, lib. iv. c. 3.

of the English Danes yielded at last to the call of their kinsmen. The forces in the Andredsweald threw themselves by a rapid march across the Thames; and Ælfred had hardly gathered men to strengthen the army which beset them in their camp on the Colne when the secret of this movement was revealed by a rising of the whole Danelaw in their aid.

The fight with the Danes.

The rising, however, only brought out the new strength of Ælfred's realm. Its policy of defence was set aside for a policy of rapid and energetic attack. The king's son Eadward, who may have ruled in the Eastern Kingdom of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex, with the Mercian ealdorman Æthelred, added to their force the men of London, fell suddenly on the pirates' camp in Essex at a moment when it was stripped of defenders, and sank the ships moored within its entrenchment. The danger however was as great in the west as in the east, for the Danes again found allies in the Welsh. They were no doubt summoned to that quarter by the house of Roderic, which was now greatly harassed by the petty princes of the border who owned Ælfred's supremacy. While a fleet from East Anglia therefore coasted round to West Wales and moored off Exeter, the host from the Colne, which had formed a new camp at Shoebury, suddenly struck past London along the line of the Thames, and crossing the Cotswolds into the Severn valley ravaged the lands of Ælfred's

allies. Ælfred however in person held Exeter against attack from the West-Welsh and Cornwealas, while Eadward and Æthelred nerved themselves for a final blow in the west. Gathering forces "from every township east of Parret, and both east and west of the Selwood, and also north of Thames, and west of the Severn," from almost all Ælfred's England in fact, save the western parts which were supplying the king's own camp on the Exe, and aided by "some part of the North-Welsh people," they caught the pirate host in the Severn valley at Buttington, forced it after a siege of some weeks to fight, defeated it with a great slaughter, and again drove it to its old quarters in Essex.

Defeat of the Danes.

Fresh supplies of fighting men, however, from the Danelaw enabled Hasting to repeat his dash upon the west, and, marching day and night across Mid-Britain, to find a stronghold within the walls of Chester. The strength of the house of Roderic lay in this quarter of Wales, and the occupation of Chester must have aimed at securing their co-operation. Deserted as the city was, its Roman walls were too strong to force, but by a close investment of the place through the winter Æthelred at last drove the northmen from their hold, though he was unable to follow them as they hurried through North Wales, and by a wide circuit through Northumbria again withdrew to a

camp on the Lea.[1] Here they were joined by their brethren from the Channel, who, foiled before Exeter, fell back ravaging along the coast to the Thames. A rout of the Londoners, who attacked them in 895, proved the strength of their camp on the Lea some twenty miles from the great city, and through harvest-tide the king, who had now come up from the west, contented himself with watching it "while the people reaped their crops." But meanwhile he was preparing for a decisive stroke. The whole of the Danish ships had entered the Lea in 896, and lay under shelter of the camp, when the pirates suddenly found the river-course blocked by two strong fortresses. The retreat of their boats to the Thames and sea was thus wholly cut off,[2] and the forced abandonment of their fleet, as the pirates struck again from their camp to the Severn, practically ended the war. After a month in their camp at Bridgenorth the Danish host broke up in 897. East Anglian and West Anglian returned to their home in the Danelaw, while the followers of Hasting retreated to their former quarters across the Channel.[3]

Ælfred's life.

"No wise man should desire a soft life," Ælfred had written some years before this last struggle with the Danes, "if he careth for any worship here from the world, or for eternal life after this

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 895. This seems the meaning of a corrupt passage in Æthelweard.

[2] Eng. Chron. a. 896.

[3] *Ibid.* 897.

Chap. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

life is over."[1] His own life had certainly been no soft one. Though he had hardly reached fifty years of age, incessant labour and care had told on the vigour of his youth, and he must have already felt the first touches of the weakness that was to bring him to the grave. But he was still a mighty hunter, waking the stillness of the "Itene Wood," along the Southampton Water, or the stiller reaches of the Cornish moorlands, with hound and horn;[2] and his life was marked by the same vivid activity as of old. To the scholars he gathered round him he was the very type of a scholar, snatching every hour he could find to read or listen to books read to him.[3] The singers of his court found in him a brother singer, gathering the old songs of his people to teach them to his children,[4] breaking his renderings from the Latin with simple verse, or solacing himself in hours of depression with the music of the Psalms. He carried in his bosom a little handbook in which he

[1] Transl. of Boethius, in Sharon Turner, "Hist. Ang. Sax." ii. 48.

[2] "In omni venatoria arte industrius venator incessabiliter laborat non in vanum, nam incomparabilis omnibus peritia et felicitate in illa arte sicut et in cæteris omnibus Dei donis fuit, sicut et nos sæpissime vidimus."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 16.

[3] "Hæc est propria et usitatissima illius consuetudo die noctuque, inter omnia alia mentis et corporis impedimenta, aut per se ipsum libros recitare aut aliis recitantibus audire."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 50.

[4] In his boyhood "Saxonica pœmata die noctuque solers auditor relatu aliorum sæpissime audiens docibilis memoriter retinebat."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 16. For his later life see *ib.* p. 43.

noted things as they struck him, now a bit of family genealogy, now a prayer, now such a story as that of Ealdhelm playing minstrel on the bridge.[1] He passed from court and study to plan buildings and instruct craftsmen and gold-workers, or to teach even falconers and dog-keepers their business.[2] At one time we find him planning a lantern with sides of horn, whose sheltered candles may serve as a rough means of measuring the hours, at another delighting in the fair form and early promise of his grandson Æthelstan, and arraying him, child as he is, with the purple cloak, and jewelled belt, and gold-hilted sword of a royal cnecht,[3] at another time urging Bishop Werfrith to turn into English the "Dialogues" of Gregory, at another hearing a law-case as he stood washing his hands in a chamber at Wardour.[4]

His love of strangers.

His love of strangers, his questionings of travellers and scholars, betray an imaginative restlessness that longed to break out of the narrow world within which his own experience bound him.[5] None were more welcome at his court than men from other lands; the frankness

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 55.

[2] "Edificia nova machinatione facere."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 43. "Aurifices et artifices suos omnes, et falconarios et accipitrarios canicularios quoque docere."—*Ib.* 43.

[3] Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. 210.

[4] Kemble, Cod. Dipl. 328: "And the king stood, washed his hands at Wardour in the bower; when he had done this, he asked Æthelm why our judgment seemed not right," etc.

[5] "Ignotarum rerum investigationi solerter se jungebat."—Asser (ed. Wise), 44.

Chap. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

and openness of spirit which breathes in the pleasant chat of his books showed itself above all in his converse with them, and a special part of his revenue was set aside for their entertainment.[1] It is in Ælfred's court that England for the first time begins to emerge from her insular isolation, and to recognize herself as a European state. Not only Welshmen and Irishmen, but "many Franks" as well as Bretons, with men alike from Southern Gaul and Friesland, the country about the mouths of the Rhine with which England was soon to come into closer contact, offered aid of book or sword to the king. Even Danes were among the comers,[2] for the fight was hardly over when the fusion of races began, and we find a young noble of "pagan" stock playing scholar among the monks at Athelney.[3]

Athelney.

Athelney indeed was the largest of Ælfred's experiments in the way of getting foreign aid for his religious and intellectual undertakings. In founding this abbey, as a thankoffering for the deliverance which had begun in the marshes, he

[1] "Eleemosynarum quoque studio et largitati indigenis et advenis omnium gentium, ac maximâ et incomparabili contra omnes homines affabilitate et jocunditate."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 44.

[2] "Franci autem multi, Frisones, Galli, Pagani, Britones et Scoti, Armorici, sponte se suo dominio subdiderunt, nobiles scilicet et ignobiles, quos omnes sicut suam propriam gentem, secundum suam dignitatem regebat, diligebat, honorabat, pecuniâ et potestate ditabat."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 44.

[3] "In quo monasterio unum Paganicæ gentis edoctum in monachico habitu degentem, juvenem admodum, vidimus, non ultimum scilicet eorum."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 61.

found his main obstacle in the refusal of every West Saxon, of free or noble birth, to become a monk. There were monasteries indeed still remaining in the country, like Malmesbury or Glastonbury, but whether from the shock of the Danish inroads, or from the tendency of popular feeling, or from the circumstances of their original foundation, they either were or had become groups of unmarried clerks, bound together by the common endowment of the house, but refusing obedience to any definite rule.[1] "Regulars," as those who lived by rule were called, seem to have been looked on with scorn in Wessex, and Ælfred found no West Saxon willing to become in this sense a monk. He could only meet the difficulty by a settlement of strangers. John, the Old Saxon, who was among the foreign scholars at his court, was sent into Somerset as abbot, a few priests and deacons were hired from abroad to join him, and, by an expedient that marks the

[1] The passage in Asser (ed. Wise), p. 61, is most important in its bearing on our later monastic history. "Quia nullum de suâ propriâ gente nobilem ac liberum hominem, nisi infantes . . . qui monasticam voluntarie vellet subire vitam habebat, nimirum quia per multa retroacta annorum curricula monasticæ vitæ desiderium ab illa tota gente, nec non et a multis aliis gentibus funditus desierat, quamvis perplurima adhuc monasteria in illa regione constructa permaneant, nullo tamen regulam illius vitæ ordinabiliter tenente (nescio quare) aut pro alienigenarum infestationibus quæ sæpissime terra marique hostiliter irrumpunt, aut etiam pro nimia illius gentis in omni genere divitiarum abundantia (propter quam multo magis id genus despectæ monasticæ vitæ fieri existimo), ideo diversi generis monachos in eodem monasterio congregare studuit."

time, slaves were bought in Gaul to serve as lay brethren, and children from the same quarter to fill up, as they grew to manhood under the abbot's teaching, the thin ranks of his monks.[1] The experiment however proved an unsuccessful one. John was driven back to court by an attempt of some monks to assassinate him, and we hear nothing of Athelney as a school in later days.

Othere and Wulfstan.

In spite however of this luckless experiment strangers were as welcome as ever at Ælfred's court, and we can still see in the king's own words with how keen an attention he listened to the tales of far-off lands that they brought him. Othere must have been one of the Wikings that the king had gathered about him for aid in fight against their brother plunderers; it was to "his lord King Ælfred" that he told how long and narrow a land was the northman's land. "All that man can pasture or plough lies by the sea," hard pressed by the "wild moors," the broad fells, where Fin and Cwen carried on their warfare with the men of the fiords. Here Othere dwelt "northernmost of all the northmen," in waste Halgoland, no one to the north of him save a few scattered Fin-folk. He was "one of the first men

[1] "Johannem presbyterum monachum, scilicet Eald Saxonum genere, Abbatem constituit, deinde ultramarinos presbyteros quosdam et diaconos; ex quibus cum nec adhuc tantum numerum quantum vellet haberet, comparavit etiam quamplurimos ejusdem gentis Gallicæ, ex quibus quosdam infantes in eodem monasterio edoceri imperavit et subsequente tempore ad monachicum habitum sublevari."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 62.

in that country, though he had not more than twenty horned cattle and twenty sheep and twenty swine, and the little that he ploughed, he ploughed with horses;" but he was wealthy in the wealth of the north, in his six hundred reindeer, in his whale fishery, and in his share of the tribute the Fins paid the men of his country, the skins of martens, reindeer and bear, cloaks of bear or other skin, and eiderdown and whalebone, and ship-ropes of whales' skin or seals'-skin. Othere's cruise had been along the western coast northward from Halgoland; and in his longing "to try how far that country lay to the north, and whether any lived north of the waste," he had done a feat of seamanship which found no rival till the days of the Tudors, by rounding the North Cape and penetrating into the bay of Archangel the then country of "the Beormas." "Thither he went chiefly, besides his craving to see the country, on account of the walruses, because they have very noble bone in their teeth, some of which they brought to the king." Wulfstan's was a less daring cruise, though it told Ælfred of the Baltic and its huge rivers and the strange customs among the tribes of the "Eastland," where "there are many burhs, and in each is a king, and there is much honey and fish, and the king and the richest men drink mares' milk, and the poor and the slaves drink mead."[1] But both helped Ælfred to realize

[1] See Ælfred's insertion in his "Orosius."

the lands from which his assailants came, lands where, as he notes, "the Engle dwelt before they came hither to this country," and the far-reaching energy of the men who had pushed to Nova Zembla and the Neva before swooping upon Britain.

Ælfred's court.

With all this restless activity Ælfred was a thorough man of business, careful of detail, industrious, methodical. Each hour of the day had its appointed task; there was the same order in the division of his revenue and in the arrangement of his court. The more definite organization which the court, the personal following of the monarch, was taking, marked the steady development of the monarchy. It is now that we see coming into view the great officers who were to play so prominent a part in after politics, the Horse-Thegn, or Constable;[1] the Cup-thegn,[2] or Butler, whose rank may be seen from the fact that the office[3] was held by the father of Osburga, Æthelwulf's first wife and the mother of Ælfred; and the Horder, or Treasurer.[4] The last of these was fast rising into importance as the growth of the royal revenue enabled Ælfred to enlarge more and more the sphere of his expenditure. His budget is the first royal budget we possess; and

[1] Ecgwulf was King's Horse-Thegn in 897.—Eng. Chron. a. 897.

[2] Sigewulf Pincerna in 892. Cod. Dip. 320.

[3] Asser (ed. Wise), pp. 4, 5.

[4] "Ælfric thesaurarius" in 892. Cod. Dip. 320.

though the fact that the national expenses were still in the main defrayed by local means renders any comparison of it with a modern budget impossible, it is still of interest as indicating the wide range of public activity which even now was open to an English king.[1]

Ælfred's budget.

A sixth of the royal income was devoted to what would be called the military and civil services. Though the main cost of war had not as yet fallen on the state, since the fighting man was bound to serve without pay and provide his own arms and supplies,[2] while works of fortification were a burden on burh and township,[3] the new course of warfare with the Danes had already thrown some expenses on the royal horde, for it can only have been from his own resources that Ælfred drew the means of building the "long ships" which formed the nucleus of his fleet, or of maintaining their Frisian crews. Civil administration was still more a matter of local expenditure; while justice was one of the most lucrative sources of the royal revenue; but the hoard had to defray the cost of the household itself, the privy purse of the king, and the pay of his officers and thegns. Another sixth of the royal funds was devoted to public works, with such expenses as those involved in the restoration of London and its walls, or in the

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), pp. 65-67.
[2] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 220, note 3.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 108.

bringing of workmen and artificers from foreign lands; while as large a sum was devoted to what we may roughly term the diplomatic services and foreign affairs, though under this head we must include the reception and entertainment of the strangers who thronged the court, as well as the expenses incurred by the king's envoys and negotiators. The public services, public works, and diplomacy thus formed the main branches of Ælfred's expenditure. An eighth of his revenue however was devoted to the relief of the poor, and another eighth to education, to his literary enterprizes, the books which he distributed to various churches, and mainly, no doubt, to the maintenance of the palace school. The remainder formed the ecclesiastical side of his budget, half of it going to the two monasteries founded by the king at Shaftesbury and Athelney, half to religious houses in other parts of the realm, such as that which he was raising at Winchester, as well as in gifts to abbeys among the Welsh, in Ireland, and even in Brittany and Gaul. Gifts such as these had no doubt a political as well as a religious end, for in all these quarters it was needful for Ælfred to find friends in the strife that he looked for with the Dane.

Ælfred's foreign policy.

That resistance to the pirates was a matter not only of English but of European concern, was as clear to Ælfred as to Æthelwulf, and at the end of his life we find him striving to take up again

the threads of his father's policy, and opening a system of alliances which was to be carried out by his successors. The Counts who were now rising up in Flanders were, through their hold upon the Scheldt from which the Danish squadrons had so often issued, among the most important of Ælfred's neighbours; and with the marriage of his younger daughter Ælfthryth to Baldwin the Second,[1] began that close political and industrial connexion between England and the Low Countries, which has through so long a course of centuries influenced the fortunes of both. The connexion was no doubt due to Judith, the daughter of Charles the Bald, who, after her two former marriages with Æthelwulf and Æthelbald, re-crossed the Channel to become the wife of Baldwin Iron-arm, the first Count of Flanders, and the mother by him of this Baldwin the Second, while as Ælfred's step-mother and sister-in-law, she probably maintained relations with the English court which at last brought about the marriage of Ælfthryth. It is only in this marriage however, and the ceaseless intercourse with the Papal court, to which he seems to have sent money and gifts every year, that we can find indications of Ælfred's foreign policy.

Ælfred and Britain.

His main work had in fact to be done nearer home. To the westward he had to deal with the North Welsh, whom he had severed from the

[1] W. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (ed. Hardy), vol. i. 193.

Danes by the interposition of English Mercia, but whose hostility remained a danger hardly less than that from the heathen. From the first, however, his policy in this quarter was served by divisions amongst the Welsh themselves. During the early years of his reign the house of Roderic the Great, which remained the dominant power among them, still maintained its friendship with the northmen; but the petty chieftains, whose freedom it threatened, preferred the distant supremacy of Wessex to the nearer rule of the house of Roderic, and in 885 the kings of Demetia and Brecknock, with the princes of Gwent owned Ælfred as their lord, in exchange for his pledge of defence against their enemy.[1] Ten years later the war with Hasting widened into a war with the northern Welshmen, and in 897 the submission of the house of Roderic at the close of the strife left all North-Wales subject to the king. Though we know less of his diplomacy in the states to the northward of the Danelaw, we can see that Ælfred was busy both with Bernicia and the kingdom of the Scots. The establishment of the Danelaw in Mid-Britain, the presence of the pirates in Caithness and the Hebrides, made these states his natural allies; for pressed as they were by the Wikings alike from the north and from the south, their only hope of independent existence lay in the help of Wessex. Of the first state

[1] Asser (ed. Wise), p. 49.

we know little. The wreck of Northumbria had given freedom to the Britons of Strath-Clyde, to whom the name of Cumbrians is from this time transferred. The same wreck restored to its old isolation the kingdom of Bernicia. Deira formed part of the Danelaw, but the settlement of the Danes did not reach beyond the Tyne, for Bernicia, ravaged and plundered as it had been, still remained English, and governed as it would seem by the stock of its earlier kings. The weakness of this state drew it to Ælfred's side; and we know that the Bernician ruler, Eadwulf of Bamborough, was Ælfred's friend.[1]

The kingdom of the Scots.

The same dread of the Danes drew to him the kingdom of the Scots. The Scot-kingdom, which at its outset lurked almost unseen among the lakes of Argyle, now embraced the whole of North-Britain from Caithness to the Firths, for the very name of the Picts had disappeared at a moment when the power of the Picts seemed to have reached its height. The Pictish kingdom had risen fast to greatness after the victory of Nectansmere in 685. In the century which followed Ecgfrith's defeat, its kings reduced the Scots of Dalriada from nominal dependence to actual subjection, the annexation of Angus and Fife carried their eastern border to the sea, while to the south

[1] Sim. Durh. "Hist. S. Cuthberti" (Twysden, p. 73). Ealdred, Eadwulf's son, "erat dilectus regi Edwardo, sicut et pater suus Eadulfus dilectus fuit regi Elfredo."

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

their alliance with the Northumbrians in the warfare which both waged on the Welsh extended their bounds on the side of Cumbria or Strath-Clyde. But the hour of Pictish greatness was marked by the extinction of the Pictish name. In the midst of the ninth century the direct line of their royal house came to an end, and the under-king of the Scots of Dalriada, Kenneth Mac Alpin, ascended the Pictish throne in right of his maternal descent.[1] For fifty years more Kenneth and his successors remained kings of the Picts. At the moment we have reached however, the title passed suddenly away, the tribe which had given its chief to the throne gave its name to the realm, and "Pict-land" disappeared from history to make room first for Alban or Albania, and then for "the land of the Scots."[2] With these internal revolutions its English neighbours had little concern. But a common suffering drew the new monarchy in the north to the new monarchy which was rising in the south, for the storm of invasion had broken more roughly over Alban than over England itself. Shattered by a strife in which its northern and western districts had become almost independent, and menaced with

[1] The most complete account of Pictish history during this obscure period is given by Skene in his "Celtic Scotland," i. cap. vi. Kenneth's accession was in 844.

[2] Skene, "Celtic Scotl." i. 335. The first instance of the use of "Scotti" for any inhabitants of "Pict-land" proper seems to be in 877. Skene, "Celtic Scotl." i. 328. "Pictavia" becomes "Albania" from 889. *Ibid.* i. 335.

the danger of actual extinction, it was natural that the kingdom of the Scots should look for friendship if not for actual succour to the West Saxons and their king.

Ælfred's death.

The strife however for which this diplomacy was preparing the way, was to be wrought by hands other than the king's. Hardly four years in fact had passed since the triumph over Hasting when the "stillness" he had sighed for came to him. Ælfred died on the 28th of October, 901. "So long as I have lived," he wrote, as life was closing about him, "I have striven to live worthily." It is this height and singleness of purpose, this concentration of every faculty on the noblest aim, that lifts Ælfred out of the narrow bounds of Wessex, for if the sphere of his action seems too small to justify a comparison of him with the few whom the world owns as its greatest men, he rises to their level in the moral grandeur of his life. And it is this that still hallows his memory among Englishmen. He stands indeed in the forefront of his race, for he is the noblest as he is the most complete embodiment of all that is great, all that is lovable in the English temper, of its practical energy, its patient and enduring force, of the reserve and self-control that give steadiness and sobriety to a wide outlook and a restless daring, of its temperance and fairness, its frankness and openness, its sensitiveness to affection, its poetic tenderness, its deep and

CHAP. IV. Ælfred. 878-901.

reverent religion. Religion indeed was the groundwork of Ælfred's character. His temper was instinct with piety. Everywhere throughout his writings that remain to us the name of God, the thought of God, stir him to outbursts of ecstatic adoration. But of the narrowness, the want of proportion, the predominance of one quality over another which commonly goes with an intensity of religious feeling or of moral purpose he showed not a trace. He felt none of that scorn of the world about him which drove the nobler souls of his day to monastery or hermitage. Vexed as he was by sickness and constant pain, not only did his temper take no touch of asceticism, but a rare geniality, a peculiar elasticity and mobility of nature, gave colour and charm to his life. He had the restless outlook of the artistic nature, its tenderness and susceptibility, its quick apprehension of unseen danger, its craving for affection, its sensitiveness to wrong. It was with himself rather than with his reader that he communed, as thought of the foe without or of ingratitude and opposition within broke the calm pages of Gregory or Boethius; but the loneliness that breathes in such words never begot in him a contempt for men or the judgement of men. Nor could danger or disappointment check for an hour his vivid activity. From one end of his reign to the other every power was bent to the work of rule. His practical energy found scope for itself in a material

and administrative restoration of the wasted land; his intellectual energy breathed fresh life into education and literature; while his capacity for inspiring trust and affection drew the hearts of Englishmen to a common centre, and began the upbuilding of a new England. Little by little men came to recognize in Ælfred a ruler of higher and nobler stamp than the world had seen. Never had it seen a king who lived only for the good of his people. Never had it seen a ruler who set aside every personal aim to devote himself solely to the welfare of those whom he ruled. It was this grand self-mastery that won him love and reverence in his own day, and it is this that has hallowed his memory ever since. "I desire," said the King, "to leave to the men that come after me a remembrance of me in good works." His aim has been more than fulfilled. His memory has come down to us with a living distinctness through the mists of exaggeration and legend which time gathered round it. The instinct of the people has clung to him with a singular affection. The love which he won a thousand years ago has lingered round his name from that day to this. While every other name of those earlier times has all but faded from the recollection of Englishmen, that of Ælfred remains familiar to every English child.

CHAPTER V

THE HOUSE OF ÆLFRED

901–937

Eadward the Elder.

WITH the death of Ælfred the work for which he had so long prepared passed into the hands of his son.[1] Eadward seems only partially to have shared

[1] For Eadward's reign the great authority is the English Chronicle. The portion of this work due to Ælfred's pen, or written under his supervision, probably ends in 891 [Earle, "Parallel Chron." Intr. xv.-xvii.], but from 891 to Eadward's death in 924 the annals are carried on by a writer of singular force. Of the years from 894 to 897 Earle says, "This is the most remarkable piece of writing in the whole series of Chronicles. It is a warm, vigorous, earnest narrative, free from the rigidity of the other annals, full of life and originality. Compared with that passage every other piece of prose, not in these Chronicles merely, but throughout the whole range of extant Saxon literature must assume a secondary rank." ["Parallel Chron." Intr. xvi.] But the years that follow, though told with less warmth and fulness, are told in the same spirit. From 901 to 910 indeed the narrative is scanty; but from 910 to 924 "we have a steady, regular, well-written narrative, homogeneous and unmixed in matter, like the head-piece of this section, and unlike all the rest of the Chronicle. It is all sieges and battles, and fortifications, and garrisons, and surrenders, and armed pacifications. It is a model of uniformity, both in matter and manner." [Earle, "Parallel Chron." Intr. xviii.]

his father's taste for letters; while his younger brother, Æthelweard, mastered both Latin and English in the palace-school,[1] Eadward's studies, like those of most of the young nobles, were restricted to books and songs in his own tongue.[2] But he was already famous as a warrior who had rivalled the glory of Æthelred in the storm of the pirate camp on the Colne as well as in the victory of Buttington; and with his father's warlike ardour he inherited his political capacity. Like Ælfred he was able to set aside for years the dreams of mere warlike enterprize; and his earlier reign, though troubled for a while by the revolt of a claimant of his throne, was in the main a time of peace. The failure of their last attack had left the English Danes little minded to quarrel with Wessex, while the strength of their Wiking allies was thrown for some years into the strife on the other side of the Channel, where Hrolf was establishing himself in the valley of the Seine. The peace indeed was far from being unbroken. Ælfred's death had revived the question of the succession; the order established under Æthelwulf by which his sons followed one another to the exclusion of their children was now exhausted; and it can only have been by a

[1] "In quâ scholâ utriusque linguæ libri, Latinæ scilicet et Saxonicæ, assidue legebantur."—Asser (ed. Wise), p. 43.

[2] He and his sister Ælfthryth, who married Count Baldwin, "et psalmos et Saxonicos libros et maxime Saxonica carmina studiose didicere."—*Ibid.*

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

decision of the Witenagemot that the children of Æthelwulf's elder sons were set aside, and the royal stock settled in the descendants of Ælfred, the youngest. That this decision expressed the national will was shown at Eadward's accession. When his cousin Æthelwald, king Æthelred's son, rose to claim the crown, he found himself without support and forced to fly from Wessex.[1] The shelter which he found among the Danes of Northumbria and his acceptance as their king, marks the first step in that union of Danes and Englishmen which was to be the work of the coming century; and the impression of this must have been strengthened when in 905 he moored off the eastern coast and roused the Danes of East-Anglia to follow him in an attack on Wessex.[2] Eadward however anticipated the blow by appearing with an army on the Ouse; and the fall of Æthelwald in a fight with the Kentish division of this force ended the war. The Wedmore Frith was renewed at Ittingford in 906,[3] and Wessex enjoyed four years more of undisturbed tranquillity.[4]

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 901.

[2] *Ibid.* a. 905.

[3] *Ibid.* a. 906.

[4] For this period the earlier English Chronicle of Winchester is largely supplemented by a Chronicle drawn up at Worcester (that known as Tiber. B. iv. of the Cotton Collection, and the "D" of Mr. Earle. "Parallel Chron." Intr. xxxix. etc.). What distinguishes this Worcester Chronicle is a large insertion of northern annals, beginning in 737; the earlier of which may be due (Stubbs, Archæol. Journ. No. 75, p. 236, note) to Bishop Werfrith of Worcester, one of Ælfred's literary

That Eadward's patience however by no means implied any abandonment of Ælfred's policy, above all his plans for a national union, was shown in a change of the royal style. With Ælfred the connexion of his two realms had remained to the last a purely personal connexion. He had been Mercian king among the Mercians; he had remained West-Saxon king among the men of Wessex. But from the first moment of his reign Eadward showed his resolve to look on the two dominions he ruled as a single realm, and to blend their peoples in some sort into a single people. He is no longer king of the West-Saxons or of the Mercians, but "King of the Angul-Saxons."[1] The title is no doubt a transitional one; it re-

assistants, who sate from 873 to 915. But for Æthelflæd's campaigns we have, inserted, a wholly independent Mercian Chronicle, ending with her death, and equal in fulness of detail to the parallel Winchester Chronicle, which restricts itself to Eadward's exploits and omits those of his sister. There are difficulties indeed in reconciling these accounts chronologically. The death of Æthelflæd is placed in the Mercian Chronicle at 918; in the Winchester Chronicle at 922. The latter is probably the more correct, for we find Leicester, which according to the Mercian Chronicle had submitted to the Lady in 918, still Danish and leading a Danish here against her brother in 921; and as the preceding dates, at any rate from Æthelred's death, are linked in series with this final one, I have ventured to place them also four years later than the year assigned to them by the Worcester chronicler.

[1] "Angul-Saxonum rex" is his common description in the charters of his reign, a description almost confined—as we shall see—to Eadward. See Kemble, Cod. Dip. 333, 335, 1080, 1083, 1084, 1090, 1091, 1092, 1093, 1094, 1095, 1096. In a charter of 901, his first year (Cod. Dip. 1078), his "Angul-Saxonum rex" explains itself by an after phrase, "Omnium judicio sapientum Gewissorum et Mercensium."

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred. 901-937.

presents the effort of the king to look on the Mercian Engle and the Saxon Gewissas as a single folk rather than any actual fusion of the one with the other; we know indeed that the separate life of Mercia under Æthelred and Æthelflæd remained undisturbed for all the change in the royal style. But the change was none the less a significant one. If no such people as "the Anglo-Saxons" existed or could be made to exist, the effort to create such a people had its issues in an after time, when not only West-Saxon and Mercian but every man from the Forth to the Channel should be looked on by his king and regard himself as one of an English people.[1]

Chester rebuilt.

Nor did the king's policy of inaction extend to his Mercian realm, for it must have been with his sanction or at his command that the Mercian rulers took at this moment what proved to be a first step in the final struggle with the Danelaw. In the Peace of Wedmore one of the main aims of Ælfred had been to cut off the Danelaw from the Welsh; and he had secured this by retaining all of the older Mid-England westward, as was roughly said, of the Watling Street as a new English Mercia. But in its northern portion the barrier was a weak

[1] It may be well to note that the word "Angul-Saxon" is of purely political coinage, and that no man is ever known, save in our own day, to have called himself an "Anglo-Saxon." The phrase too applied strictly to the Engle of Mercia and the Saxons of Wessex, not to any larger area. For the general use of "Engle" and "Saxon," I must refer my readers to Mr. Freeman's exhaustive treatise, "Norm. Conq." i. App. A.

one; for the extremity of the tract which now formed the Mercian Ealdordom—the northern part, that is, of our modern Cheshire—was little more than a strip of land across which the Dane of the Five Boroughs could easily push to call his old allies on the Welsh border to arms. To strengthen this barrier had been the purpose of its rulers from the first. At its weakest point lay the ruined city of Chester, to whose military importance the recent harbourage of Hasting within its walls had probably drawn their attention. Commanding as it did the passage over the lower Dee, and the main roads from Mid-England to North-Wales, or from South-England into the wild country which had once been Cumbria, Chester furnished also a port where a fleet could be stationed to hold the mastery of the Irish Channel, and cut off the English Danelaw from the Danes of the Irish coast. Nor was it hard to restore it to its older strength. Ruined and deserted as the town had lain since its surrender to Æthelfrith in 607,[1] the military strength of its position was such as could be little harmed by time and neglect. The huge trench which severed the block of sandstone on which it stood from the rest of the higher ground, the massive walls which girt in its site, the marshy level and the river course which formed an outer barrier round them, were still ready to hand; and in their "renewal" of the

[1] It was still a "waste chester" when Hasting took refuge there.—Eng. Chron. a. 894. Flor. Worc. (ed. Thorpe), i. p. 113.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

town[1] in 907 Ealdorman Æthelred and his wife seem to have done little more than give protection to the passage across the Dee, by raising a mound with a stockade or fort on its summit in the low ground beside the bridge, and by extending the older walls in this quarter to the river. It was probably to aid in the re-peopling of the town that a secular house of the Mercian Saint, Werburgh, was founded in the north-eastern quarter of the city: and the security of the little settlement may have been provided for by a custom which we find existing in later days, that bound every hide in the shire about it to furnish a man at its town-reeve's call to repair walls and bridge.[2]

Outbreak of the Danes.

Small as the settlement was, the end of the Mercian rulers was gained by their seizure of the town, for the shortest road between Wales and the Danelaw was now in their hands. That the check was felt by the Danes was shown by a growing restlessness which broke out at last in open warfare. A raid of the pirates over Mercia in 910[3] had to

[1] This is only recorded in two of the later copies of the Chronicle, Mr. Earle's B. and C. at 907. "Her wæs Ligceaster geedneowad."—Flor. Worc. (ed. Thorpe), i. p. 120.

[2] It was only by slow degrees that the new town extended itself over the ruins of the old. St. Werburgh's house stood alone in its north-eastern quarter; and only the southern half of the city, where we find on either side of Bridge Street the churches of St. Bridget and St. Michael, can represent the town of Æthelflæd, for yet more to the south the church of St. Olaf marks a later extension which can hardly be earlier than the days of Cnut.

[3] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 910. The raid is told in greater detail by Æthelweard, whose Chronicle, till now a mere version

be repulsed at Tottenhale by a joint force of Mercians and West-Saxons under Eadward himself, who avenged the attack by following the beaten host across the border and harrying their land there for five weeks.[1] The blow seems to have roused the warlike spirit of the whole Danelaw. In 911 Eadward was drawn southward by danger from the sea, where in the preceding year a pirate force had landed in the Severn and been driven back with difficulty by the fyrds of the neighbouring shires. It marks the quiet work that had been done in the years of rest which Ælfred had gained, that Eadward was able to muster a hundred ships and to ride master of the Channel. But with his stay in the south Mercia was left to its own resources; and the Northumbrians resolved to avenge the losses of their brethren across Trent. A "frith" like that of East-Anglia had bound them till now to Wessex, but this was broken, and setting aside the offers of accommodation made by Eadward and his Witenagemot,[2] the pirate host under its kings Ecwils and Halfdene poured ravaging over Mercia. But distant as Eadward himself was, his forces were already on the march, and as the Danes fell back loaded with spoil they were overtaken and attacked. The English victory was complete, and

of the English Chronicle of Winchester, becomes independent from about 893 to its close in 975. His whole work, however, is all but worthless.

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 910. [2] *Ibid.* a. 911.

thousands of Danes fell round their two kings on the field.

If Ealdorman Æthelred led the host to this triumph, the effort must have been his last; for he died in 912,[1] and the changes which followed on his death told on the whole character of the conflict. Within Mercia itself the change was little, for Æthelflæd, who remained its sole governor, had acted throughout as joint-ruler with Æthelred. But for Wessex it was great. The death of Æthelred enabled Eadward to take a new step in the disintegration of the shrunken Mercian realm, and he now took from Mercia London and Oxford "and the lands that belonged to them,"[2] in other words, the lower valley of the Thames. The annexation was important, not only as pointing forward to Eadward's plans of a yet wider re-union, but as doing away with the barrier which Ælfred had set between Wessex and the Danelaw by the interposition of the Mercian Ealdormanry. In bringing his border into contact with that of the Danelaw, Eadward announced that the time of rest was over, and that a time of action had begun. His course, however, was marked by extreme caution. It was easy to secure the line of the Thames by renewing, as Ælfred had done, the older walls of London, a work of reparation which has left its mark everywhere among the Roman brickwork

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 912. [2] *Ibid.* a. 912.

The Campaigns
of
EADWARD & AETHELFLAED.
English Miles
0 20 40 60
Note.- The Five Boroughs underlined, Lincoln
Ribchester
Ribble
Nidd
Whurfe
York
Aire
Ouse
Manchester
Mersey
Tiddwell
Bucforn
Eddisbury
Chester
The Peak
Dor
(Derby)
Bakewell
Don
Trent
Humber
Lincoln
The Wash
Nottingham
Derby
Dee
Trent
Sow
Stafford
Wroxeter
Tamworth
Leicester
Stamford
Norwich
Cherbury
Bridgenorth
Severn
Welland
Ouse
Nen
Huntingdon
Warwick
Northampton
Godmanchester
Towcester
Cambridge
Hereford
Avon
Ouse
Bedford
Buckingham
Stony Stratford
Ivel
Ouse
Colne
Braintree
Colchester
Wye
Gloucester
Oxford
Ittingford
Dunstable
Lea
Hertford
Withan
St. Albans
Maldon
Thames
London
Bath
Severn
Thames
Thames
Canterbury
Dover
Walker & Boutall del. et sc.

Chap. V. The House of Ælfred. 901-937.

and masonry; while the deep morasses along the valley of the Lea still offered a fair check to any attack from the Danes in Essex. But at the point where the boundary of the Danelaw struck to the north-west from the Lea across the bare uplands of the Chilterns the way lay open to an inroad, and it was to guard this open ground that Eadward seized the ford over the Lea, first by a fort or stockaded mound on the northern side of the river between the little streams of the Maran and the Beane, and then by a like fort on the southern bank, two "burhs" which have since grown into our Hertford.[1] The bend of its present shire-line eastward along the upper course of the Stort and so round by the crest of the Chilterns, may represent the land which Eadward took across the line fixed by the Frith to form a district for his new fortress; but its seizure was not the only sign of a break with East Anglia. Essex, shorn as it was of its western half along the Thames and the Chilterns, still remained a part of Guthrum's kingdom; but Eadward now proceeded to shear away a fresh portion of it by entering its southern districts with an army, and taking post at Maldon on the Blackwater, while his men reared a "burh" a little inland at Witham.

Æthelflæd and the Watling Street.

With the erection of this fortress the Danes were thrown back on the valley of the Colne, and cut off from all access to the mouths of the Thames

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 913.

or the Blackwater, while southern Essex passed into English hands. The line of Guthrum's Frith was now therefore abandoned, and Eadward's frontier led from the sea along the valley of the Chelm, straight westward to Hertford, and thence along the brink of the Thames valley. For the next four years however the king made no further advance, though he was doubtless busy throughout them in organizing his later campaigns and in aiding the more active enterprize of his sister. While Æthelflæd strengthened her western frontier against any inroad from the Welsh by the erection of forts at Scargate and Bridgenorth,[1] she barred any further raids of the Danes upon Mercia by firmly establishing herself on the flank of the Danelaw, and seizing the line of the Watling Street. None of the roads that traversed Roman Britain have remained so famous as this great line of communication. It stretched from London over the chalk downs of Hertfordshire through a lonely and thickly-wooded country to Verulamium, and descending into the low claylands of the Ouse at Dunstable, again mounted the Northamptonshire slopes at Stony Stratford to pass over the clearer tract beyond Towcester into the basin of the Trent. From the moment that it stooped to the lower ground of Central Britain its course was

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 912. This entry however is only preserved in two chronicles, Earle's B. and C., the older Cott. Tibb. A vi. and B. i., both of Worcester origin.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

dictated by the woodland of Arden. It ran closely along the edge of this great forest, by the bounds of our Leicestershire, and bending round its northern skirt to pass through the narrow gap of open country which parted Arden from Cannock Chase, struck over the central water-shed of Britain to Wroxeter in the Severn valley. From this point its line seems originally to have been prolonged to the Welsh coast near Anglesea; but the size and importance of Chester under the Roman occupation show that a branch road from Wroxeter to that city must soon have come into existence, and along this branch road the main stream of traffic, both to Wales and to north-western Britain, was from that time directed.[1] As the English conquerors crossed its course, however, the tract must have sunk for a while into disuse and silence. But the strangers were awed by the long line that they met so often in their progress, and which their fancy associated with the Milky Way, whose white line of stars were thrown athwart the sky as the white line of the road was thrown athwart Britain. In their after legend it became "the road that King Wætla's sons made over England from the eastern sea to the sea in the west"; and the memory of this long-lost myth lingers in its later name of the Watling Street.[2]

[1] For Watling Street see Guest, "Origines Celticæ," ii. 218 *et seq.* It is doubtful whether the road from Dover to London can claim the name.

[2] The name is at any rate as old as Ælfred and Guthrum's

Tamworth and Stafford.

While Eadward was guarding his flank against the East-Engle, Æthelflæd wrought a like work for Mercia by the fortification of two burhs which commanded this road.[1] The first was Tamworth, whose site marked the point where the new and direct line to Chester diverged from the older Watling Street. A rise of ground (now known as the Castle Hill) breaks the swampy levels at the junction of the Anker with the Tame; and a vill of the Mercian kings had been established here at an early time, which with the little "worth" that grew up about it commanded what was then the only practicable passage over either river to the plains of the Trent. On this rise Æthelflæd threw up a huge mound, crowned with a fortress, portions of whose brickwork may still be seen as one zig-zags up the steep ascent. From Tamworth however she soon turned to a yet more important point. As the road struck to the north-west, it entered a narrow pass between

Frith in 897. Their boundary ran from Bedford "upwards on the Ouse unto Watling Street." (Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 153.) Flor. Worc. a. 1013 explains the name, "id est, strata quam filii Wætlæ regis ab orientale mare usque ad occidentale per Angliam straverunt." Chaucer in his "House of Fame" says,

> "So there, quoth he, cast up thine eye,
> See yonder, lo, the galaxie,
> The which men clept the Milky Way,
> For it is white, and some—par fay—
> Y-callin it han Watlinge Street."

Dr. Guest however prefers, I cannot see why, a derivation from "gwyddel," the "broken men" or robbers in the woods along its course. "Orig. Celt." ii. 234, 235.

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worcester), a. 913.

the heights of Cannock Chase and the channel of the Trent, across which ran the little stream of the Sow, on its way to the greater river. The road crossed this stream at a "stone ford," or paved point of passage; and in guarding this point by the fortress which has grown into our Stafford,[1] Æthelflæd not only blocked all access to the upper Trent, but occupied what, in the physical state of England at the time, was the most important strategical point of Middle Britain.[2]

Æthelflæd and the Fosse Way.

To the north of Arden the Mercian border was now fairly secure. Chester blocked all passage over the Dee; Stafford all passage along the Trent valley; Tamworth any march along the older line of Watling Street on the upper Severn. But to the south of the great forest Mercia still remained accessible by the Fosse Road. The Fosse Way was one of the two great lines of communication which ran athwart Britain from the north-east to the south-west. Its course was roughly parallel to that of its fellow-road, the Icknield Way,[3] and it closely resembled it in character. As the Icknield Way ran along the face of the chalk range from the Gwent of East-Anglia to the Gwent about Old Sarum, so the

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worcester), a. 913.

[2] Its importance was recognized by the two successive castles which the Conqueror built here, one in the town itself, the other on a more distant height.—Freeman, "Norm. Conq." iv. 318.

[3] See "Making of England," i. 137.

Fosse Way ran from Lincoln to Bath along the face of the oolitic range which stretched across Mid-Britain from the estuary of the Severn to the estuary of the Humber.[1] Its course thus led direct from Leicester into the valley of the Avon, and by the Avon valley to the lower Severn and South Wales. It was to block this road and secure central Mercia that Æthelflæd turned as soon as she had ended her work on the Watling Street.[2] After erecting a fortress at Eddisbury, she chose as her main barrier the settlement of the Wærings on a little rise near the sluggish waters of the Avon, about midway along its course, and here she fortified the "burh" which has grown into our Wæringawic or Warwick. For the defence of this settlement she reared[3] between town and river one of those mounds which marked the defensive warfare of the time, and which, stripped as it is of every trace of the fortress with which she crowned it, and covered with works of far later date, still remains to witness to the energy of the lady of Mercia.

Eadward's advance into Mid-Britain.

But though the lines of Trent and Avon were alike secure, and the roads to Wales on either side of Arden wholly in her hands, Æthelflæd's caution was not yet satisfied, and two years more were spent in setting up "burhs" at Cherbury,

[1] For the Fosse Way see Guest, "Four Roman Ways," "Orig. Celt." ii. 236-237.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Worcester), a. 914.

[3] "In fine autumni."—Flor. Worc. i. 123.

CHAP. V.
The House of Ælfred.
901-937.

Warbury, and Runcorn,[1] at the confluence of the Weaver and the Mersey. Meanwhile in southern Britain the long delayed contest became more and more imminent. The king's course was still a slow and cautious one. He had cleared his eastern flank by the conquest of southern Essex, and secured his border-line in that quarter by the "burhs" at Witham and Hertford. But his warfare in the east had probably ended in a new frith with the East-Anglians; for after a rest of four years we find his advance directed not against East-Anglia, but against the Danes of Mid-Britain or the Five Boroughs. The nearest of their settlements lay just northward of the valley of the Thames, in the upper valley of the Ouse. Here, in earlier days, the house of the Bokings had planted their "ham" of Buckingham on the little stream, and since the making of the Danelaw this "ham" had been the southernmost of the Danish settlements in Mid-Britain; with Bedford and Huntingdon in fact it formed a line of towns, each with its jarl and army, which held the valley of the Ouse. It was in the hands of Jarl Thurcytel "and his holds" when in 918 Eadward marched to attack it. A siege of four weeks made him its master;[2] and here as elsewhere he built "burhs" on either side the river to guard its passage, as well as to bar any raid upon the valley of the Thames. The capture of the town, however,

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 915. [2] *Ibid.* (Winch.), a. 918.

was followed by the submission of its jarl and its holds; and the severity of the blow was shown by a like submission of "almost all the chief men that belonged to Bedford, and also many that belonged to Northampton."

Conquest of Mid-Britain.

Their submission drew the king onward both to the eastward and to the north. In 919 he marched along the Ouse through the flat meadows of Olney upon Bedford,[1] which offered no resistance, and which he guarded by a "burh" on the southern bank of the stream. Two years later, in 921, he pushed forward on to the upland of Mid-Britain, and seized and fortified the site of the ruined Towcester. Meanwhile he was providing with his old caution against danger at either end of his long line by erecting fresh fortresses at Maldon in Essex, and at Wigmore in our Herefordshire. But cautious as his advance had been, its real import could no longer be disguised, and the seizure of Towcester roused the Danes of Mid-Britain into action. Not only the Danes of Northampton and of Leicester but the whole force of the Five Boroughs made a fierce onset on the burh at Towcester. Fierce as it was, however, it was beaten off by the new townsmen. Eadward hastened to secure the town, which must have been guarded as yet only by a trench and stockade, with a wall of stone;[2] and the presence of his arms brought about the submission of North-

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 919.

[2] *Ibid.* a. 921.

ampton, with Jarl Thurfrith and its host, as well as the district which obeyed it, a district which stretched as far as the Welland.

Conquest of East-Anglia.

But while the king was thus pressing on the Five Boroughs, a far fiercer conflict was raging on his flank. The Danes of East-Anglia had sprung to arms even before their fellow Danes in central Britain; and in this quarter fighting had been going on through the whole year. Early in the spring the Danes of Huntingdon threw themselves fruitlessly on the new burh at Bedford; and then quitting Huntingdon set up a fresh encampment at Tempsford, where they were soon attacked by the English fyrd of the neighbouring districts. The capture of Tempsford, with its king, jarls,[1] and warriors, gave fresh heart to the assailants; and a force of Englishmen drew together from Kent, Surrey, and Essex for the siege of Colchester. Their success was again complete; the town was stormed, and its defenders slain; while a counter raid of the Danes upon Maldon ended in the utter rout of the pirates. It was at this moment that the completion of the walls of Towcester and the submission of Northampton set Eadward free to act in the east. His first blow was at the district about the Fens. A few miles' march over the flat Ouse country brought him to the spot where the English village of Godmanchester was rising by the ruins of the Roman Durolipons on the road

[1] Toglos and Manna, Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 921.

that skirted the Wash. On a rise across the river which was then the "Hunters-down," stood the fortress which the owners had so lately abandoned —a fortress of importance as commanding the passage of the Ouse, whose site, as well as that of the burh with which Eadward replaced it, is still marked by the mounds which rise over the river.[1] Master of the whole Ouse valley, a fresh march of the king to Colchester, and his rebuilding of the town, was followed by the sudden submission of all the Danes of East-Anglia and Essex, as well as of the "here" which found its centre at Cambridge; and no part of the Fen country remained to the Danelaw save the northern tract about Stamford. The town stood on a stone-ford over the Welland, and was one of the Five Boroughs, with its twelve lawmen and Danish burghers and common lands beyond the walls. But it submitted when the king and his fyrd marched on it in 922; and its obedience was secured by a mound and fort which Eadward raised over against it on the opposite bank of the river in what became a southern "burh" of lesser size.[2]

Æthelflæd attacks the Five Boroughs.

What had made the king's triumph in Mid-Britain so easy and complete was to a great extent, no doubt, the energy of his sister in the west. While the English shire-levies cleared East-Anglia on one flank of his advance, Æthelflæd was mastering the Five Boroughs on the other. The

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 921. [2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 922

march of Eadward on Northampton had in fact been made possible by the triumphs of the Mercian host in the valley of the Trent. As the river curves from the heights of Cannock Chase to the eastward, it receives the waters of two important affluents from the north and south. The Derwent flows down to it from the crags of the Peak, while the Soar wanders to it through the grassy levels of our Leicestershire. On one of these rivers the earlier English conquerors had planted their settlement of North-weorthig, whose position in the waste among the wild animals of the chase was marked by the new name it had received from the Danes, the name of Deora-by, or Derby.[1] Under the Danes the place became one of the Five Boroughs round which the Danelaw of Mid-Britain grouped itself, and it was the first of the five to bear Æthelflæd's attack. In the August of 917 it passed into her hands,[2] and in 918 she marched up the valley on her other flank, that of the Soar, to attack the second of the Five Boroughs, Leicester. Again her attack was successful, and within the walls of her own conquest she is said to have heard of the submission of York.[3]

Mid-Britain conquered.

The news of this last triumph however had hardly reached Eadward when it was followed by

[1] Æthelweard, a. 870, lib. iv. c. 2.
[2] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 917.
[3] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 918, says of the Yorkmen: "Some gave her pledge, some bound themselves with oath, that they would be at her reding" (command).

the news of Æthelflæd's death.[1] But the blow came too late to save the Danelaw. Only two of the Five Boroughs indeed now remained unconquered; and Eadward's siege of the first of these, Nottingham, completed the work of the year. The town stood on the bend of the Trent, a few miles eastward of the confluence of the Derwent and the Soar. It was here that the road from the south crossed the great river, for further along its course the marshes of Axholme hindered all passage; and the importance of the place had been shown at the very outset of the Danish wars when its seizure by the pirates foiled the efforts of Æthelred and Ælfred to save the north from their grasp. In size and wealth it was probably with Lincoln the most important of the Five Boroughs, while as a strategical point it was more important than any, for it commanded the navigation of the Trent, while it was the key alike of Northumbria and Central Britain. The closing of Eadward's forces upon Nottingham[2] in 922 was thus the crisis of the war. The town yielded and was secured for the while by the fortress on the southern bank of the river, while the king reaped the fruits of his success in the submission of the whole Mercian Danelaw, for Lincoln, whose fate is not mentioned, no doubt submitted on the fall of Nottingham.

[1] Eadward was at Stamford at this time.—Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 922.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 922.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

The principle of personal allegiance.

With the clearing of the Trent valley the conquest of Mid-Britain was complete. Guthrum's kingdom and the Five Boroughs had alike bowed to Eadward's sword. But the work of conquest was far from being the only work of Eadward during these memorable years. It is indeed the administrative reconstruction which went hand in hand with the king's campaign that accounts for the slowness and caution of his advance. How firmly he clung to the idea which his title of "King of the Anglo-Saxons" embodies, the idea of a single people ruled directly by a single king, was shown in his dealing with the Mercian ealdormanry. On the death of Æthelflæd the last traces of Mercian independence were suppressed; the girl whom his sister had left behind her was sent to a nunnery; and the kingdom, with its Welsh dependencies, brought under Eadward's direct government.[1] The districts of the conquered Danelaw were in the same way brought into the general realm. But they were brought into it in a very different way from Mercia. The conditions of the struggle indeed were giving a wholly new character to the relations of the people towards its rulers. The war had violently hastened forward a revolution which had long been silently changing the whole structure of English society.

[1] "And all the people of the land of Mercia . . . submitted to him; and the kings of the North-Welsh, Howel and Cledauc and Jeothwel and all the North-Welsh people sought him to be their lord."—Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 922.

Even at the time of their first settlement in Britain the invaders had passed beyond the stage of merely personal right, the stage in which freedom, law, and government are regarded as inherent in the freeman himself, and in which a share in the common land of the tribe falls to the share of the freeman because he is free. Though traces of this older personal bond remained in the gathering of the kin in their separate villages, as in the allotment of the soil to the heads of families, yet land had even then become the inseparable accompaniment of the freeman, the badge and test of his freedom: he was a freeman because he was a land-owner.[1] But it was long before the relation of the freeman to the land wholly obliterated the older conception of personal freedom. In earlier English history the small holder and the big holder stood equal in law-moot or in witenagemot, and even the landless man might choose what lord he would. But at the close of the Danish wars we find a new organization of the people almost complete. The tendency towards personal dependence, and towards a social organization based on personal dependence, had received an overpowering impulse from the strife. The long insecurity of a century of warfare had driven the ceorl, the free tiller of the soil, to seek protection more and more from the wealthier landowner or thegn beside him. The poorer freeman "com-

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 194.

mended" himself to a lord who promised aid; and as the price of this aid surrendered his freehold to receive it back as a fief laden with conditions of military service. Henceforth his lord owns the land he tills; he is his leader to the host, he is the lord of the court at which he seeks for justice. The military, the judicial, the political organization of the people had thus become inseparably linked to the ownership of land.[1]

Its influence on the English kingship.

How quickly the principle of personal allegiance to a lord of land widened into a general theory of dependence we see from the changes it brought about in the English kingship. Whatever bonds of the older tribal sort might link the children of Ælfred to the men of their own Wessex, it was only as possessors of the soil, as lords of the land, that they could claim the obedience of Mercian or Northumbrian. To the tribal character of the kingship, which blended the king with those whom he ruled, was thus added a territorial character in which he stood wholly apart from them, and in which the relation was no longer one of traditional loyalty but of actual subjection. Still more was this the case with the conquered Dane. No tie of traditional loyalty bound the northern settler on the Ouse or the Trent to the kings who had struck him down. The only possible tie could be that of acknowledging the

[1] Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 217-222.

new master as a lord, and claiming his "peace" or protection in exchange for allegiance. It is thus that the conquest of the Danelaw was followed by the earliest instances of those oaths of allegiance, which mark the substitution of a personal dependence on the king as lord for the older relation of the freeman to the king of his race.

The oath of allegiance.

Eadward had already proposed to the Witan of his own Wessex,[1] that for the maintenance of the public peace they should "be in that fellowship in which the king was, and love that which he loved, and shun that which he shunned, both on sea and land"; and this principle of personal allegiance he applied to his new conquests. As he pushed over the country, the Danish hosts who yielded to him swore to hold him for their lord, to be one with him, to will all that he willed, to keep peace with all in his peace. At Buckingham, Jarl Thurcytel "sought to him to be his lord, and all the holds, and almost all the chief men who owed obedience to Bedford." Further north, "Thurferth the Jarl and the captains and all the army which owed obedience to Northampton as far north as the Welland . . . sought him to be their lord and protector." At Huntingdon all who were left of the Danes "sought his peace and protection." Finally "all the army among the East Anglians swore union with him that they would do all he would, and would observe peace towards all to

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 163.

which the king should grant peace both by sea and land; and the army which owed obedience to Cambridge chose him specially to be their lord and protector, and confirmed it with oaths, even as he then decreed it."[1] In this way no change was made in the actual organization of the country within the Danelaw. Its jarls, its holds, were left gathered round their towns as before. But they had taken Eadward for their lord, and bound themselves by a bond of allegiance to him. As the English could not be less closely connected with their king than the Danes, such an allegiance soon spread beyond the limits of the Danelaw, and became the bond of the nation at large. In Eadmund's day all men swore to be faithful to the king as a man is faithful to his lord, loving what he loves, and shunning what he shuns.[2] The king has in fact become the lord; the freeman has become the king's man; the public peace, or observance of the customary right by man towards man, has become the king's peace, the observance of which is due to the will of the lord, and the breach of which is a personal offence against him.

Eadward and the north.

The caution of Eadward however in his advance over the Danelaw was dictated not only by these administrative difficulties, but by a sense of the military difficulties of his task. Fight his way onward as he might, and firmly as he secured every

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 918, 921.
[2] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 252.

step in his path by mound and burh, he knew that the Danes of Mid-Britain were still far from being definitely conquered. After all the triumphs of Eadward and of his son, we shall see the Five Boroughs break out in a fierce revolt against their successor, and for a while drive the West Saxons back over the Watling Street. With the existing military system in fact, it was impossible to bridle the Danes by efficient garrisons, while to bring them to a contented acquiescence in English rule was necessarily a work of time. We can hardly doubt that it was a sense of this danger in his rear, as well as of the formidable nature of the work to be done in the north, which made Eadward halt for a while at the Trent. Instead of a direct march on Northumbria he turned to a distant line of operations, whose aim seemed rather that of defence than of attack. From any direct onset of the Northumbrian Danes on his front the king was nearly secure. The fortresses at Nottingham and Stafford, with the other "burhs" on their flank and rear, made a passage of the Trent difficult, if not impossible. But on his north-western flank Eadward felt more open to attack. Not only might the Danes of Northumbria break over the western moors by the old Roman road from York to the Ribble to call the North Welsh to arms, but the Ostmen from Ireland might by a short march across the same wild tract bring aid to their brethren in Northumbria. It was indeed this

CHAP. V.
The House of Ælfred.
901-937.

constant succour from Ireland which made the after conquest of the northern Danelaw so long and arduous a task: and we can hardly doubt that it was a sense of the need of isolating Northumbria from both Welshmen and Ostmen ere he could safely attack it which guided the work of Eadward in the north-west.

His fortresses in the north-west.

In seizing the estuaries of the Dee and the Mersey by her "burhs" at Chester and Runcorn, Æthelflæd had closed the natural landing-places by which the Ostmen could make their way to York; but the king aimed at barring their path by fortresses which commanded every road across the moors. While with his own host therefore he set about the building of a town at Thelwell in 923, he sent a Mercian force to occupy the old Roman town at Mancunium. To the north of the estuary of the Mersey a triangular mass of hill and moorland juts out from the Pennine range towards the sea, a tract whose slopes and stream-valleys are now the homes of a mighty industry, but which then was silent and desolate.[1] On the southern side of this tract its waters gathered together at a point where the road over the moors from Eboracum came down upon the plain; and at this point had grown up under the Roman occupation the town of Mancunium. Since Æthelfrith's day the town had doubtless lain in ruin: but life was probably

[1] It still formed part of Northumbria.—Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 923. "Manchester in Northumbria."

already flowing back to a site marked out for the dwelling of man, when in 923 Eadward renewed and "manned" the walls of Manchester.[1] In the following year he linked these outlying strongholds with his general line by a burh at Bakewell, on a tributary of the upper Derwent among the hills of the Peak, a point about mid-way between Manchester and the new English conquest of Derby, while he strengthened the key of his position on the Trent by throwing a bridge over the river at Nottingham, and securing it by a second mound and stockade on the southern bank.[2]

Wessex and the north.

Efficient as these fortresses were for purposes of defence, they were as efficient for purposes of attack; for from Manchester, or Bakewell, or Nottingham alike, the forces of Eadward could close upon York, whether by the western moors, or through the fastnesses of the Peak, or by the marshy levels along the Don. Eadward seems in fact to have been preparing for a more formidable struggle than any he had as yet undertaken, a struggle not with the Danes of Northumbria only, but with the leagued peoples of all northern Britain. His victories had wholly changed the political relations which had till now existed between the northern states of Britain and the West-Saxon kings. During Ælfred's days, as through the earlier days of his son, fear of the Danes had driven the Britons of Strath-Clyde,

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 923. [2] *Ibid.* a. 924.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

with the Bernicians under the house of Eadwulf, to seek the friendship, if not the aid, of the house of Cerdic. The same fear had told even more powerfully on the kingdom of the Scots. Pirate raids had been shattering the Scot-realm for a hundred years, when in Ælfred's days [1] a Norse Earldom was set up in the Orkneys and became the base for a more systematic attack. From this base the "white strangers" had ever since been conquering and colonizing the western Hebrides and winning inch by inch the mainland.[2] From Caithness and the tract to which they have left their name of "Southern-land," or Sutherland, they pushed over Ross and Moray till, under its present king, Constantine, the Scot-kingdom had practically shrunk to little more than the basin of the Tay. Pressed between the Northmen of the Orkneys and the Danes of the Danelaw, the Scots, and in a lesser degree, their western and southern neighbours in Strath-Clyde and Bernicia, looked naturally with friendship to the power in the south which held the Danes at bay.

Submission of the northern league.

But with the triumphs of Eadward and his sister the dread of the Danes was lifted from these northern states; and no sooner was it removed than it was replaced by a dread of the West-Saxons themselves. As Æthelflæd pushed the Danelaw further from the Welsh border, we

[1] Soon after 883. Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 344, note.
[2] Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 341, seq.

see Welsh princes abandoning the West-Saxon alliance, and turning, though unsuccessfully, to the Dane. And at this moment the approach of Eadward, the steady closing round of his West-Saxon and Mercian hosts, seems to have worked as complete a change of policy in the north. In the gathering of 924 we catch the first signs of that general league of its states which was again and again to front the West-Saxon sovereigns, till it was finally broken by the statesmanship of Eadmund. While Eadward was establishing his base of operations along the south-west of Northumbria, the Scot-king Constantine, with the princes of Strath-Clyde and the lord of Bernicia, seem to have gathered to the aid of the Northumbrians. But if this were so, panic must have broken the dream of war, for we know only of this gathering by the submission to which it led. Eadward was already on his march by the route which led through the hills of the Peak, when his advance was arrested, probably at the point whose significant name of "Dor" or "door" marked the pass that opened from them on to the Northumbrian border, and where a hundred years before the north had submitted to Ecgberht. Instead of fighting, the motley company of allies sought Eadward's camp among the hills and owned him as "father and lord."[1]

[1] "And him chose there to father and lord the Scot-king and all Scot-folk, and Regnald, and Eadulf's son, and all that

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

Æthelstan.

The triumph over the northern league was hardly won when in the opening of 925 Eadward died at Fearndun in Mercia,[1] and his son Æthelstan mounted the throne.[2] After tradition preserved lovingly the memory of Æthelstan's outer aspect, of his slight though vigorous frame, and of his golden hair.[3] Nor did it dwell less lovingly on

dwelt in Northumbria, whether Englishmen or Danish or Northmen or other, and eke the King of the Strath-Clyde Welshmen, and all Strath-Clyde Welshmen."—Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 924. No passage has been more fiercely fought over than this, since the legists of the English court made it the groundwork of the claims which the English crown advanced on the allegiance of Scotland; and it has of late been elaborately discussed by Mr. Robertson on the one side ("Scotland under her Early Kings," ii. 384) and Mr. Freeman on the other ("Norm. Conq." i. Appendix G.). The entry cannot be contemporary, for Regnald, whom it makes king in Northumbria, had died three years before, in 921, nor is there indeed ground for placing the compilation of this section of the Chronicle of Winchester earlier than 975, or the end of Eadgar's reign, some fifty years after the "Commendation" (Earle, Intro. xix.-xxii.); and as the "imperial" claims of the English crown seem to date pretty much from the later days of Eadgar or the beginning of Æthelred's reign, an entry made at that time would naturally take its form from them. I cannot see any difference between this submission of the league in 924 and the subsequent submissions of the same confederates after their later outbreaks against Æthelstan, which are clearly mere episodes in the struggle for supremacy in the north.

[1] For date see Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 925; for place, Eng. Chron. (Worc.) (D.), a. 924.

[2] In the Eng. Chron. of Worcester (or Mercia) we are carefully told that Æthelstan was "chosen king by the Mercians, and hallowed at Kingston." The entry shows how stubbornly the Mercian kingdom clung to its separate existence, and how far it was still from regarding itself as fused in a single England. As king of the West-Saxons Æthelstan was doubtless chosen and hallowed at Winchester.

[3] Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. 213. See also the tradition of his learning, *ibid.* p. 209 (A. S. G.).

the character of his rule. In outer greatness indeed, in his exploits at home as in the position he occupied in the European world, no king of Cerdic's line could vie with the son of Eadward. Nor was his temper less great. The sudden failure of our information leaves his reign in some ways darker than those of his predecessors; for the Chronicle of Winchester breaks down into meagre annals with Eadward's death, and from brilliant historic light we pass suddenly into almost utter darkness.[1] But the king's acts speak for themselves. Through a reign of fifteen years we see no sign of weakness. At home Æthelstan proved himself worthy of the knightly sword with which Ælfred had girded him in his childhood: he was a great soldier and a firm ruler. But his ability found a wider sphere than in his own island realm. His temper indeed was European rather than merely English; and in his foreign policy he showed a breadth of conception, a faculty of combination, a diplomatic adroitness, which was new in the history of our kings. From Æthelwulf onwards

[1] From 925 to 975 is the most meagre section of the Winchester Chronicle (Earle, "Par. Chron." Introd. pp. xviii.-xxii.). The first twelve annals of this period only fill as many lines; and the story becomes even more jejune as it proceeds, till in Eadgar's day the historic thread is almost wholly lost, though the meagre entries are broken by four great pieces of verse. For Æthelstan's reign we are a little helped by a few insertions in the Worcester copy of the Chronicle (Earle's D.). Our main aid is from William of Malmesbury, who had before him a life of Æthelstan which is now lost. William's enthusiasm for Æthelstan however is partly attributable to the king's bounty to Malmesbury.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

the royal house of Wessex had drawn closer to a union with the states of the Continent; but Æthelstan carried out this tendency with a large and well-devised scheme of policy which bound Western Europe together against the common enemy.

League of Danes, Scots, and Welsh.

Before him, at the very outset of his reign, lay the difficulty of the north. Eadward's plans for its conquest had been checked, first by the submission of its chieftains to his supremacy, and then by his death; and the reduction of this remaining half of the Danelaw thus fell to the lot of his son. For the moment Æthelstan seemed content with the same acknowledgement of his supremacy which had satisfied his father, but the tie was drawn closer by a matrimonial alliance. In January, 925, the ruler of the Danes of York, Sihtric, appeared at Æthelstan's court, which was then at Tamworth, and took the king's sister to wife.[1] The bond however soon snapped: for in 926 Sihtric died, as it would seem by a violent death, which may have been provoked by this submission to the English king; and a renewal of the old confederacy which had met his father warned Æthelstan that the time had come to complete his work. His armies marched over the border: the northern Danelaw passed into his hands without a blow;[2] and its allies bowed

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 925.

[2] Guthferth, Sihtric's son and successor, was driven out, says Sim. Durh. "Gest. Reg." a. 927. The Canterbury Chronicle (Earle, E.) places this in 927.

to him with as little resistance. In July Æthelstan was met at a place called Eamot by Howel, King of the North-Welsh, and Owen of Gwent, as well as by the Bernician Ealdred from Bamborough and the Scot-king Constantine, "and with pledge and with oaths they bound fast the peace."[1] But the Welsh had still to make amends for their disaffection. Summoning the chiefs of the North-Welsh before him at Hereford, Æthelstan forced them to own his overlordship as Mercian king, to pay a yearly tribute of corn and cattle, and to accept the Wye as a boundary between Welshmen and Englishmen. The West-Welsh must have shared in the restlessness of their race, for from Hereford the king marched to Exeter, and, driving the Britons from the half of the town they had hitherto occupied, girded it with a wall of stone.[2] Then pushing forward to the Land's End, he forced the Cornwealas to an engagement on a field which tradition places at the hamlet of Bolleit by St. Buryan's, where two huge stones are said to mark the burial-place of those who fell in the final overthrow of their race. The Tamar was fixed as

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 926. Mr. Skene ("Celtic Scotland," i. 351) thinks that by some after words, "and they renounced all idolatry, and after that submitted to him in peace," the Chronicle "stamps its own statement with doubt." The words however may be only a misplaced bit of the actual convention with the Danes of Deira. As to the submission itself, I think it may fairly be questioned whether this is not the real transaction which the Winchester Chronicler (here of no great authority) has transferred to the last year of Eadward the Elder.

[2] Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. p. 214.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

a boundary for the West-Welsh of Cornwall, as the Wye had been made a boundary for the North-Welsh of our Wales. From this moment indeed we may look upon both peoples as integral parts of the English kingdom, owning their oneness with it by tribute, though in North Wales at least breaking their allegiance by occasional revolt.

Æthelstan king of Northumbria.

That Æthelstan's campaigns in the west did their work is plain from the fact that in the later troubles of his reign we hear no more of West-Welsh or North-Welsh risings. His work too seemed fairly done in the north. As yet all was quiet there. Æthelstan carried out his father's policy of a national union in the person of the king by taking to himself the throne of Northumbria; already King of Wessex and King of Mercia, he became in 926, after Sihtric's death, king of the Northumbrians.[1] The new realm showed no signs of disaffection; the jarls of the Danelaw indeed, Guthrum and Urm, Odda and Anlaf, Regnwald and Scule, Thurferth and Halfdene, Haward and Gunner, sate peacefully in witenagemots among Æthelstan's ealdormen. In the same great assemblies Rodward, the Archbishop of York, sate side by side with the Archbishop of Canterbury.[2] We have already seen the importance which the

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 926.

[2] In 929, perhaps in a witenagemot at York, we find among the signatures of "duces et cæteri optimates" those of Guthrum, Urm, Odda, Anlaf, as well as of "Rodeward quoque Archipræsul cum Eboracensis suffraganeis" (Cod. Dip. 347). The Archbishop signs another charter of the same year with "Urmus Dux"

destruction of the neighbouring sees, and his lonely position as representing the Engle and the Christianity of the north, had given to the northern primate. It was through him, above all, that Æthelstan could win hold on the newly-conquered kingdom; and in 934 the death of Rodward enabled the king to secure, as it seemed, this support by the appointment of a new archbishop of his own, Wulfstan,[1] while grants to Beverley and Ripon[2] secured the loyalty of the northern clergy. But Æthelstan was as eager to win over Danes as Englishmen. As we have seen, the fusion of the two races had already begun. Even in Ælfred's day we find a young Dane among the scholars at Athelney, Frisian sailors manning the royal long ships, and Norwegians like Othere at court, owning the king as their lord. The earlier days of Eadward saw the Danes of Northumbria take a West-Saxon Æthelıng for their king,

and "Guthrummus dux" (Cod. Dip. 348). At Lewton, in 931, Orm, Guthrum, Haward, Gunner, Thurferth, Hadd, and Scule, sign as "duces" (Cod. Dip. 353). In the great Witenagemot of Colchester in 931 we find Guthrum, Thurum, Haward, Regenwold, Hadd, and Scule as "duces" (Cod. Dip. 1102), and the Archbishop of York. Archbishop Wulfstan again appears in 932 in an equally large witenagemot at Middleton with Uhtred, Thesberd, Guthrum, Urm, Regnwald, Hatel, Scule, Thurferth, and "Imper" (Cod. Dip. 1107), and in the Witenagemot of Winchester, 934, with "Inhwær, Halfdene, Oswulf, Scule, and Hadd" (Cod. Dip. 364).

[1] The first charter with his signature, if genuine, must belong to this year.—Cod. Dip. 350, with note.

[2] Cod. Dip. 358 (spurious), and the equally spurious riming charters to Beverley, Cod. Dip. 359, 360, preserve the memory of these grants.

Chap. V. The House of Ælfred. 901-937

and the Danes of East-Anglia follow him as their war-leader. The war brought the northmen into close relations, if not with the English, at any rate with their royal house; and the personal relation which the oath of allegiance had established between the king and his new subjects was more than maintained by Æthelstan. Odo, one of his favourite clerks and counsellors, whom he raised about 926 to the bishopric of Ramsbury,[1] and who afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury, was certainly of Danish blood, and said to be the son of one of the pagan warriors who landed with Ivar and Hubba.[2] In all the northern sagas he is represented, in contrast to his successor, as a friend to the northmen; and though tales like that in the saga of Egil Skallogrimson, of the service of Egil and his brother Thorolf under Æthelstan's banner, can hardly be accepted as history, they at any rate preserve the belief of the north that Æthelstan maintained a force of its warriors at his court, and loved to listen to its skalds.

His Witenagemots.

As yet this policy of fusion seemed fairly successful; for Northumbria showed no signs of resistance, and the king's peaceful march on York was followed by eight years of as peaceful acquiescence in his rule. The submission of the Welsh too seemed

[1] Stubbs, "Registr. Sacr. Anglic." p. 14.

[2] "Dicunt quidam quod ex ipsis Danis pater ejus esset, qui cum classica cohorte cum Huba et Hinwar veniebant."—Vit. S. Oswaldi Anon., Raine's "Historians of Ch. of York," i. 404. "Hic, ut fertur, Ethelstano regi valde carus esset et acceptus."—Eadmer's "Life of Oswald," Angl. Sac. ii. 192.

complete; for their "under-kings" Howel and Judwal, Morcant and Owen, sate in the great witenagemots [1] which mark this period of Æthelstan's reign. In Æthelstan's witenagemots indeed, in the number and variety of their attendants, England saw somewhat of a foreshadowing of national life.[2] Never before had Danish jarls and Welsh princes, the primate of the north and the primate of the south, nobles and thegns from Northumbria and East-Anglia as from Mercia and Wessex, met in a common gathering to give rede and counsel to a common king. As witan from every quarter of the land stood about his throne men realized how the King of Wessex had risen into the King of England. Such assemblies could not fail to gather rights about them, though the rights of the witan were determined rather by their actual power as great lords and prelates than by any constitutional theory. But the old Germanic tradition, which associated "the wise men" in all royal action, gave a constitutional ground to the powers which the witenagemot exercized more and

[1] In that of Lewton in 931 we find Howel and Judwal; in another of 931, Howel, Judwal, Morcant, Eugenius; in one of 932, Howel, Judwal, Morcant, Wurgeat; in the Winchester witenagemot of 934, Howel, Judwal, Teowdor; in the Frome witenagemot of 934, Howel alone. Cod. Dip. 353, 1103, 1107, 364, 1110.

[2] The witenagemot at Lewton in 931 numbered ninety-four persons: two archbishops, two Welsh under-kings, seventeen bishops, fifteen duces, and fifty-nine "ministers."—Cod. Dip. 353. That of Colchester (March, 931), numbered sixty-nine attendants; that of Middleton (August, 932), eighty-six.—Cod. Dip. 1102, 1107.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

more as English society took a more and more aristocratic form; and it thus came to share with the crown in the higher justice, in the imposition of taxes, the making of laws, the conclusion of treaties, the control of war, the disposal of public lands, the appointment of bishops and great officers of state. There were times when it claimed even to elect or depose a king.[1]

Public order.

Under Æthelstan however its work was simply a work of order. The disturbance of society which had been brought about by the Danish wars had forced this work on the king from the very outset of his reign.[2] The laws enacted in a "great synod" at Greatley, near Andover, for the central provinces, repeated at a witenagemot at Exeter[3] for the provinces of the west, and again promulgated in like meetings of witan at Feversham and Thunresfeld for Kent and for Surrey, were in effect a code for the regulation of public order,[4] and above all for the defence of property.

[1] Kemble, "Saxons in Eng." ii. cap. vi.

[2] "That they would all hold the frith, as King Æthelstan and his witan had counselled it, first at Greatanlea and again at Exeter and afterwards at Feversham, and a fourth time at Thunresfeld before the archbishop and all the bishops and his witan, whom the king himself named who were thereat."—"Dooms of London," Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," vol. i. p. 241. "All the witan gave their weds together to the archbishop at Thunresfeld, when Ælfeah Stybb and Bryhtnoth Odda's son came to meet the witenagemot by the king's command."—*Ibid.* p. 239.

[3] "At midwinter."—Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 221.

[4] We may note that their scope extends only to Wessex: Mercia and the Danelaw had still their separate systems of legislation and government.

The defiance of justice by nobles and thegns, before which the local courts were helpless, stood foremost among the evils of the time. It was an evil which only the growing development of the "king's justice" could meet. "If any be so rich or of such great kindred," ran the Exeter law, "that he cannot be kept back from robbery or the defence of robbers, let him be taken out of that country with wife and child and all his goods into that part of this kingdom that the king wills, be he who he may, whether one of the thegns or villeins, on terms that he never return into his own land."[1] Nor could any save the king deal with the abuses of the sokes, or private jurisdictions like the later manorial courts, with "the lord who denies justice and upholds his evil-doing men," the "lord who is privy to his theow's theft," or the "reeve who is privy to the thieves who have stolen."[2] Other regulations furthered the social revolution which was replacing the freeman by the lord and his man. For the lordless man, "of whom no law can be got," his kindred were to find a lord in the folk-moot, or he was to be held for an outlaw and slain like a thief.[3] On the other hand a lord, "who has so many men that he cannot personally have all in his own keeping," was bound to set over each dependent township a reeve, not only to exact his

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 218.
[2] *Ibid.* i. 201.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 201.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

Public wealth.

lord's dues, but to enforce his justice within its bounds.[1]

The growth of public wealth in the midst of this violence was shown by the prominence which the king gives to laws affecting property. Theft becomes one of the greatest of crimes; no thief was to be spared who was taken "red handed," or who strove to defend himself or to flee from arrest.[2] Trade dealings were protected by regulations whose severity defeated its own end. No man might "exchange any property without the witness of the reeve or of the mass-priest, or of the land-lord, or of the hordere, or of other unlying man." The regulation that all marketing was to be "within port" or market town, nor was any bargaining lawful on Sundays,[3] had but a brief life, for in the mid-winter meeting at Exeter it was explicitly repealed;—"Let all the dooms made at Greatley be kept, save those about marketing within port and selling on Sundays."[4] Another enactment shows us that the growth of trade to which these regulations point was giving a new importance to the question of the coinage. In the early ages of the English occupation we find only a coarse imitation of the later Roman coinage; and rude and base as this money was, it probably sufficed for a land whose

[1] "Præponat sibi singulis villis præpositum unum."—Ll. Æthelst., Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 217.

[2] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 199.

[3] *Ibid.* 205, 207, 213.

[4] *Ibid.* 218.

exchange was mainly conducted by barter. The laws against mutilation of cattle—laws really directed against the damage done to a beast which in a perfect state was the general medium of exchange—and the fact that these laws are embodied in Ine's code, prove that such a mode of payment was still common in the opening of the eighth century in Wessex. But in Kent, the neighbourhood of Gaul and the growth of trade would narrow the sphere of such cattle barter; and the assessment of the "wer" throughout Æthelberht's law in coin shows that specie-payment was common there a century before Ine's day. It was not however till Offa's reign that the growing commerce, as well, no doubt, as the growth of internal trade, forced the regulation of the coinage on the English kings as a political matter; and it is significant that Offa drew his standard of value from the coinage of the Frankish kings.[1] But the union of the kingdoms had now made the substitution of a national coinage for these local mintages a necessity. "Let there be one money over all the king's land," ran the new law; "and let no man mint save within port." The list of towns where mints were established gives us a rough indication of the comparative greatness of the boroughs in southern Britain. London stood at their head with eight moneyers, Canterbury followed with seven, Winchester with six,

[1] See Robertson, "Histor. Essays," p. 63.

CHAP. V.
The House of Ælfred.
901-937.

Rochester had three coiners, Lewes, Southampton, Wareham, Exeter, and Shaftesbury two, Hastings, Chichester, and "other burhs" but one.[1]

Frith-gilds.

The real difficulty however lay not in making, but in enforcing the law; for strong as the crown might be its strength lay in the king's personal action, and it was far from possessing any adequate police or judicial machinery for carrying its will into effect. To supply such a machinery was the aim of the frith-gilds. Society and justice, as we have seen, had till now rested on the basis of the family, on the kinsfolk bound together in ties of mutual responsibility to each other and to the law. As society became more complex and less stationary, it necessarily outgrew these ties of blood, and in England this dissolution of the family bond seems to have taken place at the very time when Danish incursions and the growth of a feudal temper among the nobles rendered an isolated existence most perilous for the freeman. His only resource was to seek protection among his fellow-freemen, and to replace the older brotherhood of the kinsfolk by a voluntary association of his neighbours for the same purposes of order and self-defence. The tendency to unite in such "frith-gilds" or peace-clubs became general throughout Europe during the ninth and tenth centuries, but on the Continent it was roughly met and repressed. The successors of Charles the

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 207, 209.

Great enacted penalties of scourging, nose-slitting, and banishment against voluntary unions, and even a league of the poor peasants of Gaul against the inroads of the northmen was suppressed by the swords of the Frankish nobles. In England the attitude of the kings was utterly different. The system known at a later time as "frank-pledge," or free engagement of neighbour for neighbour, was accepted after the Danish wars as the base of social order. Ælfred recognized the common responsibility of the members of the "frith-gild" side by side with that of the kinsfolk, and Æthelstan accepted "frith-gilds" as a constituent element of borough life in the dooms of London.[1] In the frith-gild an oath of mutual fidelity among its members was substituted for the tie of blood, while the gild-feast, held once a month in the common-hall, replaced the gathering of the kinsfolk round their family-hearth. But within this new family the aim of the gild was to establish a mutual responsibility as close as that of the old. "Let all share the same lot," ran its law; "if any misdo, let all bear it." A member could look for aid from his gild-brothers in atoning for any guilt incurred by mishap; he could call on them for assistance in case of violence or wrong; if falsely accused they appeared in court as his compurgators; if poor they supported, and when

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," vol. i. Ine, pp. 113, 117; Ælfred, pp. 79, 81; Æthelstan, pp. 229, 237.

CHAP. V. The House of Ælfred. 901-937.

dead, they buried him. On the other hand he was responsible to them as they were to the state for order and obedience to the laws. A wrong of brother against brother was a wrong against the general body of the gild, and was punished by fine, or in the last resort by expulsion, which left the offender a "lawless" man and an outcast. The one difference between these gilds in country and town was that in the latter case, from their close local neighbourhood, they tended inevitably to coalesce. Imperfect as their union might be, when once it was effected, the town passed from a mere collection of brotherhoods into an organized community, whose character was inevitably determined by the circumstances of its origin.

The shire.

While the frith-gild was thus supplying one at least of the elements of a new municipal life within English boroughs, a new organization of the country at large was going on in the institution of the shire. In the earlier use of the word, "shire" had simply answered to "division." The town of York was parted into seven such shires. There were six "small shires" in Cornwall. The old kingdom of Deira has left indications of its divisions in our Richmondshire, Kirbyshire, Riponshire, Hallamshire, Islandshire, and Norhamshire; just as their lathes and rapes represent perhaps the old shires of the kingdoms of Kent and of Surrey. The name was used even for ecclesiastical divisions of territory; a diocese is a

"bishop's shire;"[1] a parish is a "kirk shire." But in its later form of a territorial division for purely administrative purposes, the shire was in fact the creation of an artificial "folk." Its judicial and administrative forms were all those of the "folk" transferred within artificial boundaries, and the representative life of folk-moot and hundred-moot was thus preserved in the shire, with all its incalculable consequences in later English history.

The West-Saxon shires.

The shire, so far as we can see historically, is specially a West-Saxon institution. The first traces of it indeed may probably be found in the earliest ages of West-Saxon history. The original Wessex was, as we have seen, the region of the Gwent, and the earliest portion of West-Saxon conquest within that area was the region we call Hampshire. For this region we possess no earlier name, and in the name itself we find traces of a very early date, for Hampshire is but an abridged Hamtonshire, the district that found its centre in the tun that is now represented by our Southampton. Had the formation of this district taken place after the revival of Winchester and the settlement of the West-Saxon kings and bishops there in the time of Cenwalch,[2] the district would

[1] That of Ealdhelm is styled "Selwoodshire."—Æthelweard, a. 709. On the other hand, we may note that Bæda knows only of "dioceses" in Wessex, as he knows only "regiones" in Mercia.

[2] Cenwalch reigned from 643 to 672 (A. S. C.).

naturally have taken such a name as Winchestershire, like our Leicestershire or Gloucestershire; but its name of Hamtonshire points necessarily to an earlier date than this, and one which cannot be later than the first half of the seventh century. The name however has more to tell us. A shire is necessarily a district "shorn" off from some neighbour district; and the artificial character of such a "shearing" between Hampshire and Wiltshire is shown in the absence of any distinctly marked local divisions in the bounds between the two shires, while a close connexion between the two districts is shown in the similarity of their naming. Not only does Hampshire draw its name from the "tun" of the first Gewissas at Hamton, but the "t" in our Wiltshire shows that the word is only a contracted form of Wiltonshire, or the shire that found its "tun" in our Wilton, the settlement made by the Gewissas in the valley of the little Wil or Wiley. It is possible that each tun may have been a gathering-place of its shire-folk for moots and sacrifices; but however this may have been, we cannot fail to see in the relations of the two an indication, not only of the very early existence of the shire institution amongst the West Saxons, but of the formation of the shire in its earliest shape round a central "tun."

Extension of the shire.

The West-Saxon origin of the "shire" is confirmed by the fact that its name first occurs in the

laws of the West-Saxon Ine.[1] The shire already has its shire-man or shire-reeve, whose primary business must have been the collection of the royal farms and dues from each district, but who in assessing these, and deciding on claims of exemption and the like, must from the first have tended to become the judicial officer we find him under Ælfred, and to take his place in the shire-moot in that capacity beside bishop and ealdorman. It is possible however that in Ine's day this shire organization did not extend beyond the area of the Gwent, with perhaps its dependency of the present Berkshire. Wessex indeed was already spreading beyond its older bounds; besides Sussex or Surrey, or the districts across the Thames, the West Saxons to the east of Selwood saw a new Wessex to the west of that forest in the regions of the Dorsætan and of the Somersætan. Their conquests however in this quarter were far from being completed in the reign of Ine; the conquest, in fact, of the south-west dragged on until the reign of Ecgberht, and it is likely enough that amidst the troubles of the kingdom during this period, the organization of the loosely compacted folks of "sætan" or settlers that spread over its various regions did not receive any definite form till that time. From Ecgberht's day, however, we have grounds for believing that the whole of the West-Saxon kingdom was definitely ordered in

[1] Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 107.

separate "pagi," each with an ealdorman at its head, and these "pagi" can hardly have been other than shires.[1] In the names of the bulk of them however we note a striking difference from the names of the two earlier shires. The district no longer draws its name from the central "tun." In the case of Somerset indeed, such a tun seems to have existed at Somerton, but it does not give its name to the shire. The Somersætan like the Dorsætan had perhaps never arrived at even the rude unity which in the Wilsætan is seen raising their central township to an importance that enabled it to supersede their name, and to give its own name to the district; while farther west the settlement was so sparse that even the settlers failed to print their name exclusively on the land, and it retained its old Welsh title of Devon or Dyvnaint side by side with Defnsætan.

The shire in Mercia.

In the eastern dominion of the West-Saxon kings the new institution adapted itself equally to the older kingdoms. Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Essex, became shires equally with the "sætan," of the west, though the retention of their older names showed the strength of their national tradition.[2]

[1] In the course of the Danish descents at this time the Chronicle mentions ealdormen of Hamton-shire, of the Wilsætan, of Surrey, and of Berkshire, to the east of Selwood; of Dorset, Somerset, and Devon, to the west of it. Asser mentions "Wilton-scire" in 878. He speaks of Chippenham "quæ est sita in sinistrali parte Wiltun-scire" (ed. Wise), p. 30. In his translation of Orosius Ælfred speaks of Halgoland as a "scyr."

[2] Kent however is "Kent-shire" in the record of its folk-moot under Æthelstan.—Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 216.

That the shire had spread over them by Æthelstan's time we may gather from the tenor of his laws, which speak of the shire as the settled political and judicial division throughout Wessex at large.[1] It is more doubtful when it spread over Mid-Britain. Into English Mercia it can hardly have been introduced before the annexation of that district by Eadward in 919;[2] and as the few remaining years of that king are spent in warfare, it probably dates from the days of Æthelstan. The Mercian kingdom, as its bishops' sees show, had been arranged in five distinct regions,—the land of the Lindiswaras, that of the Hwiccas, the original Mercia with its dependencies and its royal city at Tamworth, the land of the Middle-Engle about Leicester, and the land of the South-Engle with its see at Dorchester. None of these bore the name of shires; and in the earliest shire-organization their existence is only partially recognized. The land of the Lindiswaras indeed

[1] Æthelstan's laws, as I have before pointed out, only concern Wessex, but they concern all Wessex, as their reception in Kentish and Surrey witenagemots proves. The "shire" is always referred to as an old and settled thing. At Thunresfeld, probably in Surrey, the witan pledged themselves "that each reeve should take the wed in his own shire." (Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 241.) The London gild-brothers trace a track "from one shire to another." (*Ibid.* 237.) "Let forfang everywhere, be it in one shire, be it in more, be fifteen pence." (*Ibid.* 225.)

[2] I cannot agree with the suggestion that Ælfred may have formed the shires of English Mercia. In that case the bounds of the Mercian shires would correspond with the then bounds of the Danelaw. This they do not do; which makes a date after the conquest of the Danelaw pretty certain.

became Lincolnshire, that of the Middle-Engle may be equivalent to Leicestershire; but the other divisions are broken into smaller districts. Thus in the new ordering of English Mercia the land of the Hwiccas was broken into the shires of Gloucester and Worcester, while that of the Hecanas became Herefordshire; the clearings of the Hwiccas in the south of Arden were formed into a shire about Æthelflæd's new fortress of Warwick, as the dependent districts of the original Mercia along the Dee were made a shire for the fortress of Chester, and the lands of the old South-Mercians at the head waters of the Trent a shire for the fortress of Stafford. All these districts drew their names, like the earlier West-Saxon shires, from their central "town," save Shropshire, among whose "scrob," or bush, no local centre may as yet have grown into life.

The shire in the Danelaw.

This connexion of the shire with its town centre would necessarily be strengthened when Æthelstan or his successors extended the shire system over Guthrum's kingdom or the Five Boroughs; for, as we have seen, the Danes with their jarls and holds had for the most part clustered in the towns and ruled from thence the districts about them. The historic continuity of these districts indeed remained for the most part unbroken. The land of the Lindiswaras became Lincolnshire; Nottinghamshire may represent a people of the North-Engle, as Derbyshire the northern, and Staffordshire

the southern divisions of the original Mercians; Leicestershire included the land of the old Middle-Engle, as Northamptonshire, it may be, that of the South-Engle; while North-Gyrwa and South-Gyrwa land reappeared as Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire. But here as in the rest of Mid-Britain the shire-names are wholly different in character from those to the south of the Thames. The two "folks" of East-Anglia alone recall the folk-districts and ancient kingdoms of southern Britain; Gainas and Hwiccas, Hecanas and Magesætas, Middle-Engle and South-Engle, the very name of Mercia itself, alike disappeared from local nomenclature. What however distinguishes this district from the rest of Mid-Britain is that here we find a trace of purely artificial divisions. When Eadward in 912 annexed London and Oxford, each town already had "lands which owed obedience thereto,"[1] lands which could hardly have been other in extent than the present Middlesex and Oxfordshire, though the phrase itself is fair evidence that they had not as yet been brought within the shire system. Middlesex, as we have seen, owed its being to the severance of London from the rest of Essex; and in the "lands" about Oxford we may possibly see the district won at a time when it served as a frontier town against Guthrum's realm. Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Bedfordshire are other instances of purely military creation,

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 912.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

The shire-reeve.

districts assigned to the fortresses which Eadward raised at these points.[1]

In one important point the organization of the West-Saxon shires does not seem to have been fully carried out in those of the rest of Britain. In Wessex each shire had its ealdorman, the representative no doubt of its old local independence, and the head of its armed force. In Midland Britain, where ealdormen had been accustomed to rule over wider regions than those of the shires, it was perhaps impossible to identify ealdormanries with each shire, and we find groups of shires falling under the rule of the same great officer.[2] But the shire-man or the shire-reeve was present in all; and his presence gives us the clue to the

[1] "The arrangement of the whole kingdom in shires is of course a work which could not be completed until it was permanently united under Eadgar; and the existing subdivisions of southern England are all traceable back to his day at the latest" (Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 129). In East-Anglia the shire system may have been of late introduction. Indeed it can hardly have been definitely settled before the Norman Conquest, as its divisions seem to have been often regarded as a single shire up to that time, and the retention of the tribal nomenclature in Norfolk and Suffolk instead of names drawn from its town centres implies that the "shire" had won a weaker hold than elsewhere. The northern shires are of yet later date, we only hear of "Yorkshire" on the verge of the Conquest. "Durham is the county palatine of the Conqueror's minister, formed out of the patrimony of St. Cuthbert. Lancashire was formed in the twelfth century by joining the Mercian lands between Ribble and Mersey with the northern hundreds, which in Doomsday were reckoned to the West Riding of Yorkshire. Cumberland is the English share of the old Cumbrian or Strath-Clyde kingdom; Northumberland and Westmoreland are the remnants of Northumbria and the Cumbrian frontier." (Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 129.)

[2] Stubbs, i. 131.

real grounds of the shire system.[1] Though its main issues were political, and though its yet more immediate issues probably involved the first great national reconstruction of our judicial system, there can be little doubt that its original aim was strictly financial.[2] The king's reeve, like the reeve of any one else, was simply the agent through whom the king received whatever was owing to him, whether the customs of a port, or the dues of his thegns, or the customary "firm" and services of a town which lay in his immediate lordship. When the shire was once constituted, such an agent was necessary to receive that portion of the proceeds of the shire-court which fell to the crown, and by a natural extension of this duty the various sums payable within the limits of the shire as customary dues, heriots, and the like. Each shire was bound to provide, not only a stated number of men for the fyrd, but a stated sum by way of composition for the revenue which the king would have drawn from what had been the folk-land within its bounds, and at a later time a stated number of ships, or their equivalent in "ship-money." The gathering of these sums, as well as of the forfeitures and fines incurred for absence from moot and host, was the work of the shire-reeve.[3] His business, however,

[1] For shire-reeve, see Kemble, "Sax. in Eng." ii. 157, et seq.
[2] See Cod. Dip. 1323.
[3] "I command all my reeves," says Cnut, "that they justly provide for me as my own and maintain me therewith: and that no man need give them anything as farm-aid unless he choose." —Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 413.

was necessarily judicial as well as financial, for half the work of a shire-court came to consist in the ascertainment, the assessment, and the recovery of such royal dues, as well as fines and forfeitures owed to the crown; and from presiding over the trial of this class of cases the shire-reeve could not fail to pass, like the later barons of the Exchequer, into the position of a standing judge of the court. The presence of the ealdorman, and the bishop, who legally sat with him in the shire-moot, and whose presence recalled the folk-moot from which it sprang, would necessarily be rare and irregular, while the reeve was bound to attend;[1] and the result of this is seen in the way in which the shire-moot soon became known simply as the sheriff's court. It is difficult to fix the position of the early shire-reeve, or to trace the steps by which he rose to be a great executive officer, while he absorbed the judicial authority of bishop and earl.[2] But from the very nature of the case it is clear that the process must have been continually going on, and that with the very close relation of finance to government in those early times, the presence of the royal reeve in a

[1] It was, in fact, the shire-reeve and not the ealdorman who was the constituting officer of the shire-moot.—Stubbs, "Const. Hist." i. 134.

[2] Æthelstan's laws imply in the reeves a duty of putting royal enactments in force, as in the provisions of the synod of Greatanlea: and by Æthelred's day this executive character was clearly recognized. "If there be any man who is untrue to all the people, let the king's reeve go and bring him under surety," etc.—Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 283.

shire, and his regular presidency of its court, must from the first have brought home to a Mercian or an East-Anglian the sense of a national king in a more personal and continuous way than any other agency.

Æthelstan's style.

As the years passed in this work of peaceful organization, and the realm remained unstirred about him, we can hardly wonder that the king looked on himself more and more as "lord of Britain." At his accession he had adopted the style of his predecessor as "King of the Angul-Saxons";[1] but once master of Northumbria the consciousness of a larger rule blends oddly with the effort to find a common name for the lands beneath his sway. In 927 he calls himself "Monarch of all Britain;"[2] two years later, in 929, he is administering "the kingdom of all Albion;"[3] then, after two more years of fluctuation between these titles, we find him in 933 viewing himself in a more literal way as "King of the English-folk and of all the nations dwelling with them on every side."[4] But in the next year this sobriety of tone is set aside for styles of a more high-flown sort, and Æthelstan announces himself not only as "King of the Angul-Saxons

[1] A grant of 926 says "Angul-Saxonum rex."—Cod. Dip. 1099. [2] Cod. Dip. 1100. [3] *Ibid.* 347.

[4] "Angligenarum omniumque gentium undique secus habitantium rex."—Cod. Dip. 1109. In one shape or other this form of the royal style seems to have clung to the English chancery through several reigns. Its real meaning we shall see in Eadred's day.

CHAP. V.
The House of Ælfred.
901-937.

and of all Britain," but as "Angul-Saxon King and Brytenwealda of all these islands,"[1] and by a yet higher reach of language as "Basileus of the English and at the same time Emperor of the kings and nations dwelling within the bounds of Britain."[2]

Æthelstan's diplomacy.

What the worth of such claims really was we see from the fact that at the moment he used them the pompous fabric of his "Empire" was crumbling at Æthelstan's feet. Northumbria had risen,[3] and with its rising had begun a struggle which was to tax the energies of the West-Saxon kings for thirty years to come, and to end in the virtual disintegration of the English state. In some measure the strife was a result of Æthelstan's own diplomacy. He saw that his holding of the English Danelaw was not merely dependent on himself and the English Danes. The settlement of the northmen across Watling Street was flanked by like settlements in Ireland and in

[1] His subscription to the Latin charter, "Angul-Saxonum necnon et totius Britanniæ rex," is rendered in the English copy, "Ongol-Saxna cyning and brytenwealda ealles thyses iglandæs." —Cod. Dip. 1110. The word "brytenwealda" occurs here for the first time; I find no other instance of it in this reign. It is probably borrowed from the entry in the Chronicle which we have before noticed ("Making of England," ii. 66, et seq.), and in spite of the ingenious arguments built on it, seems to me merely an instance of the literary archaism and affectation of the time.

[2] Cod. Dip. 349.

[3] The imperial style is used in a grant to the Church of Worcester, by which Æthelstan hopes to win the favour of the saints in his war with "Anolafa rege Norrannorum, qui me vitâ et regno privare disponit."—Cod. Dip. 349.

Gaul; and no lasting peace could be secured with Northern Britain which did not provide against the revival of the struggle by aid from either quarter. The Danes of Deira were closely linked with those of Dublin and Waterford; their kings were drawn in fact from the same stock, and were often only driven from the one realm to be owned as rulers in the other.[1] Thus Sihtric had been king of Dublin; and when driven out thence in 920 became king at York. His son Olaf and his brother Guthferth had sailed for Dublin on Æthelstan's annexation of Deira. From the actual incidents of the later struggle the danger seems in fact mainly to have come from this quarter; but though Eadward's work in the Ribble country may have been directed to providing against descents from Ireland, we know nothing of the policy which was pursued by the English kings in this quarter, and it is clear that the danger from the northmen in Ireland occupied Æthelstan's mind far less than the danger from the northmen in Gaul.

Hrolf's settlement in Gaul.

In Gaul the work of the pirates had long been shrinking within narrower bounds. They had withdrawn from the Garonne. They were now little heard of in the Loire. But the movement of defeat was also a movement of concentration; and their attacks fell more heavily than before on the valley of the Seine. Ever since the peace of

[1] Skene, "Celtic Scot." i. 351.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

Wedmore the Seine valley had been the field of the northman Hrolf, or as later story called him, Rollo, a friend of Guthrum of East-Anglia, and who drew, no doubt, much of his strength from the English Danelaw. His work had already produced weighty results on the aspect of French politics; for it is to Hrolf's forays along the Seine that France owes her capital and the line of her kings. Paris rose into greatness as the guard of the Seine valley against his attacks, and with it rose the line of Robert the Strong, a warrior to whom the land round Paris as far as the sea had been granted as a border-land against the northmen. The defence of Paris by Robert's son Odo in 885 raised his house into rivalry even with the descendants of Charles the Great; and, in the confusion which followed on the death of the successor of Lewis and Carloman, Odo became King of the Western Franks. But his throne was disputed by a Karolingian claimant, Charles the Simple; and a strife for the crown which opened between the king at Paris and this rival king at Laon hindered the first from doing his work against the pirates of the Seine. Beaten off again and again, Hrolf with northern stubbornness still made his way back to Rouen, and in 912 his obstinacy found its reward, for in the treaty of Clair-on-Epte Charles the Simple granted to the northmen the coast at the mouth of the Seine from the sea to the Epte.

No event of the time can compare in importance with the settlement of Hrolf and his comrades in their new "Northman's land." In France its effects were felt at once. What mainly brought about the treaty was no doubt the rivalry between the Karolingian house and the house of Robert the Strong. Charles in fact sought to weaken the duchy of Paris by carving Hrolf's country out of it, and by cutting off his rivals from the sea. But the settlement not only weakened his rivals, it strengthened Charles himself. The dread that the Parisian dukes would strive to win back again the best part of their duchy bound the Normans to the cause of the Karolingian kings; and that the house of Charles the Great still kept a hold on Western Frankland for more than seventy years was due mainly to the help it drew from the Normans of the Seine. But all thought of the effects which Hrolf's settlement produced on the fortunes of France is lost for Englishmen in the thought of its effect on the fortunes of England. From the hour when the northmen settled at the mouth of Seine, the story of the country which then became Normandy interweaves itself with the story of the English people. As we pass nowadays through the northman's land it is English history which is round about us. The names of hamlet after hamlet have memories for English ears; a fragment of castle wall marks the home of the Bruce; a tiny village

Its results.

preserves the name of the Percy; while English religion and English literature look back with a filial reverence to the valley buried deep in its forest of ash-woods, through which wanders the rivulet of "Bec-Herlouin."[1] In the huge cathedrals that lift themselves over the red-tiled roofs of Norman market towns we recognize the models of those mightier fabrics which displaced the lowly churches of early England. On the windy heights that look over orchard and meadow-land rise the square grey keeps which Normandy gave to the cliffs of Richmond and the banks of the Thames. One thought is with us as we pass from Avranches to the Bresle, and this thought, the thought of England's conquest by the Norman, becomes a living thing as we stand within the minster which the Conqueror raised at Caen.

The growth of Normandy.

But long before William's day the fortunes of the one people had told on those of the other. From the first hour of the Norman settlement in the valley of the Seine the history of Normandy linked itself closely with that of England, for the rise of a Danelaw across the Channel gave a new force to the Danelaw in Britain.[2] Whatever hopes

[1] See vol. ii. p. 225.

[2] According to all the Norse sources Gönguhrolf, or Hrolf, was of Norse blood, though in Norman and French accounts Dudo and his successors, who called him Rollo, make him a Danish prince. But though the accounts that make Hrolf a Norwegian are probably right, Steenstrup holds, and Maurer on this point agrees with him, that the overwhelming majority of the host that followed him into Normandy were of Danish descent. See K. Maurer's review of Steenstrup in the "Jenäer

of preserving peaceful relations with the northmen over Watling Street may have been cherished by the house of Ælfred passed away with the settlement of their brethren in this new northman's land.[1] As help from the Danelaw had created Normandy, so help from Normandy was likely to give a new strength to the Danelaw; and the part which the Irish Ostmen had played till now in succouring and re-arousing the English pirates would probably from this time be played by the followers of Hrolf. The danger grew with the rapid growth of the new settlement. Hrolf was a statesman as well as a warrior; and throughout the reign of Eadward he was building up a state by policy as well as by arms. It was with a statesman's instinct that he clung to the king who had given him the northman's land. It was Hrolf's sword that supported Charles the Simple against his enemies, against Odo's son, Duke Robert of Paris, and against Robert's son, Hugh the Great. Amidst all the king's misfortunes the Norman leader stood firm to the Karolingian cause; it was as a loyal subject that he carried his raids over the Parisian duchy and penetrated even to Burgundy, till his energy and fidelity were rewarded by the addition of the Bessin, the district about Bayeux, to the northman's land.

Literaturzeitung," 4th series, No. 2, Jan. 13, 1877, p. 25. (A. S. G.)

[1] For Hrolf's help to Guthrum against Ælfred, see Lappenberg, ii. 71, 72.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

William Longsword.

In extent therefore as in warlike fame the power of the Normans had almost doubled at the opening of Æthelstan's reign; and while the stern hand of their leader had fashioned his pirates into a people, whose numbers no doubt grew with an influx of northmen from the English Danelaw as it passed under West-Saxon sway, his political ability was shown in the ease with which the settlement was completed and the peace that he made throughout the land. Nor were the power and ability of his son, William Longsword, less than those of Hrolf himself. William's attitude in the strife between king and duke was that of his father; while within he carried on with even greater vigour the conversion and civilization of his people. But of this civilization of the Normans, this instinctive drawing closer to the Christendom about them which was to be the key-note of their history, the France and the England of the day knew nothing. They saw simply a settlement in the heart of Western Christendom of men who had for a hundred years past been slaughtering and ravaging over Christian lands. The French spoke of them for years to come as "pirates," and called their chieftain "the Pirates' Duke." England naturally looked on them as a political danger of the gravest sort. The growing extension of their territory along the coast fronted her southern shore with a Danelaw more powerful than the Danelaw she had struck down; a Danelaw which

threatened the hold of England on the Channel, and cut off its communications with the rest of Christendom. Powerful too as Hrolf's duchy was in itself, it was yet more formidable as giving a new centre to the energy of the northmen. Beneath all the wild talk of the earliest Norman chroniclers we see that Normandy became from the first the centre of the pirates' life. If the boast that English and Irish obeyed the commands of William Longsword or the dukes that followed him may be safely set aside, it points to a real influence which the dukes wielded over the body of the Danes in England as in Ireland. It was this unity of life and action among the northmen which made Normandy so formidable a foe. Every pirate settlement was in a state of constant ebb and flow. The northman who fought to-day on the Liffey might settle to-morrow on the Trent, while a year after he might be ravaging along the Seine or the Rhine. That Hrolf's men were tilling their lands in the Bessin or the Pays de Caux gave no surety that when harvest was gathered in, their boats might not be swarming in the Humber or the Colne. And with help such as this the work of the house of Ælfred might be undone in an hour; for, conquered as it was, the Danelaw waited only for the call of Norman or Ostman to rise against its conquerors.

English alliances.

From the moment of their settlement, therefore, at the mouth of the Seine the eyes of the English

kings had been fixed anxiously on the Normans; and the result of their anxiety had already been seen in the birth of a foreign policy. It was dread of the Normans which first drew England into connexion with lands beyond the sea. Northward, eastward, and southward, the Norman pressure was felt by the states which girt in the new duchy, by Flanders and Vermandois, as by the great French dukedom and the wilder Bretons. All had in turn felt the Norman sword; all dreaded, even more than England itself, attack from Normandy; and all sought to strengthen themselves against it by bonds of kinship and diplomacy. While facing the Danes at home, the English kings had sought to guard themselves against attack from abroad by joining in this movement of union. The marriage of Ælfred's daughter, Ælfthryth, with Count Baldwin of Flanders was the first instance of a system of marriage alliances which the English kings directed from this moment against the common foe; and the same purpose may be seen in the marriage of Eadward's daughter Eadgifu with the Frankish king Charles the Simple.[1]

Æthelstan's early policy.

Æthelstan not only adopted his father's policy, but carried it out on a far wider scale. He had hardly mounted the throne when he wedded one of his sisters, Eadgyth, to Otto, the son of the

[1] Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. 197.

German king Henry;[1] and two years later a fresh political marriage linked him to a power nearer home. The second marriage followed on a change which passed at this moment over French politics. Whatever hopes of aid against the Normans Æthelstan may have drawn from his sister's marriage with Charles, were foiled by the claim to the Frankish crown which was now made by Rudolf of Burgundy, a brother-in-law of Duke Hugh of Paris; for this fresh attack of the Parisian house necessarily threw Charles back on his old policy of seeking aid from the pirates at Rouen. The English king therefore turned at once to the house which this new phase of politics marked out as the pirates' foe, and in 926 a marriage was arranged through the intervention of the Count of Boulogne, the son of Baldwin of Flanders and the English Ælfthryth, between Æthelstan's sister Eadhild and Hugh the Great.[2] The splendid embassy with which the Duke of Paris sought Eadhild's hand shows the political importance of the match; and its weight may have told on the renewal of the struggle between Rudolf and Charles which followed it. But it told more directly on the strength of England by absorbing the forces of William Longsword in the years during which Æthelstan was annexing

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 924. "Offæ Eald Seaxna cynges suna." But see for date Lappenberg, "Hist. Ang. Sax." ii. 134.

[2] Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. 216, 217.

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

the Danelaw over the Humber, and turning into a practical sovereignty his supremacy over the Welsh.

Æthelstan and William Longsword.

Abroad therefore Æthelstan's schemes seemed as successful as at home. His French confederates not only held their own against the Karolingian king, but gave full occupation to the Norman duke. In 929 indeed the death of Charles the Simple left William Longsword alone in the face of his foes. Rudolf was now the unquestioned master of France; and in the following year his victory over the northmen of the Loire was a signal for a combined attack on the Normans of the Seine. While Hugh the Great pressed them from the south, the Bretons, over whom Hrolf and his son had asserted vague claims of supremacy, and from whom they had wrested the Bessin, put the Norman colonies in the newly won land to the sword and attacked Bayeux. But the hopes of Æthelstan were foiled by the vigour of William Longsword. Not only were the Bretons swept back from the Bessin, but their land of the Cotentin, the great peninsula that juts into the British Channel, became Norman ground, while their leader, Alan, fled over sea to the English court.[1] The choice of his refuge points to the quarter from whence this attack on Normandy

[1] Alan was Eadward's ward, and had come in 931 from the English court. See Lappenberg, ii. 138 with the note, and p. 107 with note.

had probably come. If direct attack however had broken down, Æthelstan was more fortunate in the skill with which he wove a web of alliances round the Norman land. Flanders was already knit to the new England through Count Arnulf, a grandson of Ælfred like Æthelstan himself. The Count of Vermandois was on close terms with the English king. The friendship of the Parisian duchy came with the marriage of Duke Hugh; while Brittany was still at the king's service, and Æthelstan could despatch Alan again to carry fresh forays over the Norman border. Already troubled with strife within his own country, William Longsword saw a ring of foes close round him and threaten a renewal of the struggle for life. But the quickness and versatility of the duke were seen in the change of front with which he met this danger. The claims of the Karolingian house on his fidelity had ceased with the death of Charles the Simple; no Karoling claimant for the throne appeared, and William was able without breach of faith to sell his adhesion to Rudolf of Burgundy. By doing homage to Rudolf in 933 he not only won peace with the Parisian dukes, but a formal cession of his new conquests in the Cotentin; and the dissolution of the league left him free to deal with Æthelstan.

The revolt of Northumbria.

A descent of the Ostmen from Ireland on the shores of Northumbria warned the English king of William's power to vex the land, and while

CHAP. V.

The House of Ælfred.

901-937.

it woke fresh dreams of revolt in the Danelaw encouraged the Scot king, Constantine, to weave anew the threads of the older confederacy against the English king.[1] In 934,[2] though the presence of the northern primate and some of the Danish Jarls at his court show that Northumbria still remained true to him,[3] the growing disturbance forced Æthelstan to march with an army into the north,[4] and to send a fleet to harry the Scottish coast. But its ravages, if they forced Constantine to a fresh submission, failed to check his intrigues, or to hinder him from leaguing with Ealdred of Bernicia and the Irish Ostmen to stir up a fresh rising of the Danelaw. With the Ostmen Constantine was closely connected through their leader, Anlaf or Olaf, a son of the Northumbrian king, Sihtric, who had found refuge at the Scottish court on his father's death, and on Æthelstan's annexation of his realm. Constantine had first shown the change which had taken place in his

[1] Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 352.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 934; (Winch.), a. 933.

[3] The grant to Worcester just before his march against "Anolafa rege Norrannorum, qui me vitâ et regno privare disponit" (Cod. Dip. 349) is attested by "Rodewoldus archiepiscopus" (a blunder for Wulfstan), and "Healden dux." Wulfstan is again present in a witenagemot at Frome at the close of the year, on the king's return from the north, December 934, but no northern names appear among the duces.—Cod. Dip. 1110.

[4] Sim. Durh. "Hist. Dunelm. Ecc." lib. ii. c. 18 (Twysden, p. 25). "Fugato deinde Oswino rege Cumbrorum et Constantino rege Scottorum terrestri et navali exercitu Scotiam sibi subjugando perdomuit."

political sympathies by giving Olaf his daughter to wife;[1] and after the earlier failure of their plans Olaf had sailed to Ireland, and, placing himself at the head of the Ostmen, again lent himself to the plots of the Scottish king. The influence of Olaf was seen in the withdrawal of the northern Jarls from the English court within a year or two after the campaign of 934,[2] and when in 937 he appeared with a fleet off the Northumbrian coast the whole league at once rose in arms. The men of the northern Danelaw found themselves backed not only by their brethren from Ireland but by the mass of states around them, by the English of Bernicia, by the Scots under Constantine, by the Welshmen of Cumbria or Strath-Clyde. It is the steady recurrence of these confederacies which makes the struggle so significant. The old distinctions and antipathies of race must have already in great part passed away before peoples so diverse could have been gathered into one host by a common dread of subjection, and the motley character of the army pointed forward to that fusion of both northman and Briton in the general body of the English race which was to be the work of the coming years.

Brunanburh.

At the news of this rising Æthelstan again marched into the north. He met his enemies on

[1] Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 352.

[2] We find no Danish names among the attesting duces throughout the rest of Æthelstan's reign.

the unknown field of Brunanburh,[1] and one of the noblest of English war-songs has preserved the memory of the fight that went on from sunrise to sunset. The stubbornness of the combat proves that brave men fought on either side. The shield-wall of the northmen stood long against the swords of Æthelstan and his brother Eadmund; the Scots fought on till they were "weary with war." But the West-Saxons "in bands of chosen ones" hewed their way steadily through the masses of their foe, their Mercian fellow-warriors "refused not the hard hand-play," and at sunset the motley host broke in wild flight. "The Danes," shouts the exulting singer, "had no ground for laughter when they played on the field of slaughter with Eadward's children." Five of their kings and seven of their jarls lay amongst the countless dead. Olaf[2] only saved his life by hastily shoving

[1] The Winchester and other Chronicles insert under 937 the first of the four poems which treat of the annals of this period, the Song of Brunanburh. The only other detailed account of the strife is in the Egils Saga (in Johnstone, "Antiq. Celto-Scandicæ," p. 42, etc.); but the Saga is of too late a date and too romantic a character to be used as an historical authority. The site of Brunanburh is still undetermined. Mr. Skene ("Celtic Scotland," i. 357) would fix it at Aldborough; but Mr. Freeman and Professor Stubbs abandon the effort to localize it in despair. The "Brunanburh" of the song becomes in the saga "Vinheidi," and in Simeon of Durham ("Gest. Reg." and "Hist. Dunelm.") "Wendune" and "Weondune." Flor. of Worcester places it by the mouth of the Humber.

[2] Skene distinguishes this Olaf of Dublin from Olaf, Sihtric's son, who seems to have returned to Scotland with Constantine ("Celtic Scotland," i. 357).

out his boat to sea and steering for Dublin with the remnant of his men, while Constantine left his son covered with death-wounds in the midst of his slaughtered war-band. The old king's faithlessness had stirred a special hatred in the conquerors. "There fled he—wise as he was – to his northern land! No cause had he, the hoary fighting man, for gladness in that fellowship of swords! no cause had he, the grey-haired lord, the old deceiver, for boastfulness in the bill-crashing."[1]

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 937.

CHAPTER VI

WESSEX AND THE DANELAW

937—955

The severance of the north.

FROM the battle-field of Brunanburh, where "dun kite and swart raven and greedy war-hawk" were sharing the corpses with the "grey wolf of the wood," Æthelstan turned with a glory such as no English king had won. The fight, sang his court-singer,[1] was a fight such as had never been seen by Englishmen, "since from the east Engle and Saxon sought Britain over the broad sea." A hundred years later indeed men still called it "the great fight."[2] Nor was the victory a doubtful one. "The two brothers, king and ætheling, sought their own land, the land of the West-Saxons, exulting in the war." But victory as it was, Brunanburh marks the beginning of a great defeat. The national union which had been conceived by Ælfred and partially carried out by Eadward and Æthelstan, could only be embodied

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 937. [2] Æthelweard, lib. iv. c. 5.

in the king himself; it was only by a common obedience to one who was at once King of the West-Saxons, King of the Mercians, King of the Northumbrians, and Lord of the Jarls of Mid-Britain, that West-Saxon, Mercian, Northumbrian, and Dane, could forget their distinctions of locality and race, and blend in a common England. Such a threefold kingship and lordship of the Dane Æthelstan had won in his earliest years of rule; and the years of peace which had passed since the submission of Northumbria seemed the beginning of a time of national union. But with the rising under Olaf the prospect of union vanished like a dream. Vanquished as it was, Northumbria was still strong enough to tear itself away from the king's personal grasp, and to force Æthelstan to restore its old under-kingship with the isolated life which that kingship embodied. The hard fighting of his successors, if it forced the north to own their supremacy, never succeeded in bringing it again within their personal sovereignty: the under-kingdom was indeed replaced later by an earldom, but the land remained almost as much apart from the kingdom at large under earl as under under-king; and on the very eve of the Norman conquest, no king's writ ran in the Northumbria of Siward.

The system of ealdormanries.

The severance of the north, in fact, was the first step in a process of reaction which was to undo much that the house of Ælfred had done.

CHAP. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

The growth of the monarchy, aided as it was by the strife against the Dane and by the personal energy of the kings themselves, had carried it beyond the actual bounds of English feeling. The national sentiment which the war had created, real as it was, was as yet too weak to set utterly aside the tradition of local independence, and to look solely to a national king. It had carried the monarchy too beyond the actual possibilities of government. Government, as we have seen in Æthelstan's efforts to restore order in Wessex, rested from the very necessities of the time on the presence and personal action of the king. The administrative machinery by which later rulers, Norman or Angevin, brought the land within the grasp of a central power was still but in its beginning. Their great creation of a judicial machinery for the same purpose had as yet hardly an existence. The disorder which taxed the king's energies south of the Thames must have been even greater in the tract over which the war had rolled to the north of it; and his occasional visits to Mercia or the Danelaw could give little of the succour which Wessex felt from his presence within it. It was the weight of these political and administrative needs that was felt in the second decisive step towards the disintegration of the realm, the creation of the great ealdormanries. Ælfred indeed had led the way in this creation by his raising Æthelred into the ealdor-

man of English Mercia. But the danger of such a measure at once disclosed itself, for though Æthelred acted strictly as an officer of the king, summoning the witan by his licence, and seeking confirmation from him for judgement or grant, yet the tradition of local kingship and of individual life in the country itself raised him into a power which Eadward felt to be inconsistent with any union of the peoples round a common king. At Æthelred's death, therefore, he found no successor; and on the death of the Lady, his wife, Mercia was taken under the direct rule of the crown. The policy of Eadward was in his earlier years the policy of Æthelstan himself. There was no restoration of the Mercian ealdorman, still less any indication of the extension of the system over other parts of the realm. With the shock of Brunanburh, however, and with the renewed isolation of northern Britain, such an extension seems to have become inevitable; and it was in the later years of Æthelstan, or in the short reign of Eadmund which followed, that we find the system of ealdormanries adopted as a necessary part of the organization of Britain.

Its limitations.

But though this revival of the old political divisions seemed the only form of organization open to the English kings, their subsequent measures show that they were not blind to its defects. If the earlier kingdoms were restored, the place of the king in each was taken by an

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

ealdorman, who, however independent and powerful he might be, was still named by the West-Saxon sovereign and could be deposed by that ruler and the national witan, while his relation to the folk he governed was that of a stranger, and had none of the strength which the older kings had drawn from their position as representatives of the blood of their races. In the second place, these ealdormen were bound to the West-Saxon throne by their own royal West-Saxon blood.[1] As we have seen, the growth of Wessex had been simply an extension of the West-Saxon race, and as a result of this, its various divisions had been committed to the charge of ealdormen chosen from the one royal stock. Different as were the circumstances before them, Æthelstan or Eadmund followed the tradition of their house in committing the states of Mid-Britain to ealdormen of their own blood. Such an arrangement seemed a security against their reviving the claims of the folks they ruled to their old national independence, and in this respect it was certainly successful, for from this time we hear of no attempt on the part of any of these states to break away from the common English realm. But on the other hand, as the history of Wessex itself in the past had shown, it brought with it another danger. These princes of the blood with the weight of their states behind them could bring heavy pressure to

[1] Robertson, "Hist. Essays," "The King's Kin."

bear on the royal government. Their kinship drew them into close relations with the court, which soon became the scene of their struggle for supremacy and of their mutual rivalries, until the anarchy of early Wessex was reproduced in that of England under Æthelred the Second.

Creation of the eastern ealdormanries.

The aim of the crown in creating the first of these great ealdormanries, that of East-Anglia,[1] was probably to weaken the Danelaw by detaching from it all that was least Danish, and that could be thoroughly re-Anglicized as a portion of the English realm. The ealdordom was intrusted to Æthelstan, a noble of the royal kin,[2] and stretched far beyond East-Anglia itself to include the old country of the Gyrwas about the fens,[3] with perhaps Northamptonshire, and the district of

[1] The date of its creation is really uncertain; but Lappenberg, from the Hist. of Ramsey, assigns it to Æthelstan's reign.

[2] He "exchanged his patrimonial forty hides in his native province of Devon for the forty hides at Hatfield, which Eadgar gave to Ordmær and his wife."—Robertson, "Hist. Essays," p. 179. His father's name was Æthelred (Cod. Dip. 338), but this can hardly be the king of that name "who died eighty-five years before the name of Æthelstan is missed from the charters." He may have been his grandson. Æthelstan's name "is found in connexion with the charters of his great namesake." (Robertson, "Hist. Essays," 180, with note.)

[3] "The diocese of Dorchester, as it existed in the tenth century, though once a portion of the Mercian kingdom, was not included under the jurisdiction of the Mercian ealdorman. The shires of Bedford, Hertford, Cambridge, Huntingdon, and Northampton, with the district of Kesteven, seem to have belonged to the ealdordom of Æthelwine of East-Anglia; and as in the reign of Æthelred the reeves of Oxford and Buckingham were brought to task by Leofsige, ealdorman of the Essex, the remainder of the diocese would appear to have been

CHAP. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

Kesteven. Probably about the same time was created the ealdormanry of the East Saxons by the elevation of Ælfgar, the father of Eadmund's queen Æthelflæd at Domerham,[1] who was succeeded by Brihtnoth as husband of his daughter, Ælflæd. Essex[2] seems to have included, besides the shire of that name, those of Oxford and Buckingham, and also possibly that of Middlesex with London.[3] Taken together, the two ealdormanries formed in fact the kingdom of Guthrum in its largest extent, and as the East-Saxon ealdormen, whether from kinship or no, seem to have uniformly acted in union with those of East-Anglia, Æthelstan became practically lord of all eastern Britain, and his nickname of the "Half-King" shows that he was soon recognized as a force almost equal to that of the crown.

Eric Blood-Axe.

In the years that followed Brunanburh, however, even if any ealdormanry were as yet created, the results of its creation were unseen; and the care of Æthelstan was centred mainly in the north. As we have said, his victory was far from restoring his original rule. Though eight years had passed since he "took to the kingdom of the North-

placed under the ealdorman of the East Saxons."—Robertson, "Hist. Essays," p. 181. The boundaries of the eastern ealdormanries however must be regarded as very uncertain.

[1] Ælfgar died about 951-3.—Robertson, "Hist. Essays," p. 189. Eng. Chron. a. 946.

[2] See note, *ante*.

[3] This however is only an inference from facts in themselves uncertain.

umbrians," the rising under Olaf showed that the attempt at a real union was premature, that the Danelaw over Humber could only still be governed through a subject king, and he a king of northern blood. Such a king however Æthelstan had ready to hand. His diplomacy had long been as busy in the north as in the south; and he seems to have aimed at finding aid against the Danes by seeking the friendship of the new power which had risen up among the northmen of Norway. Harald Fair-hair had died in a hoar old age on the eve of Brunanburh; and though his kingdom was disputed among his sons, Eric Blood-Axe got mastery of most of it. Eric is one of the few figures who stand out distinct for us from the historic darkness which covers the north. "Stout and comely, strong and very manly, a great and lucky man of war, but evil-minded, gruff, unfriendly, and silent,"[1] he and his witch-wife, Gunhild, whom he had found, said the legend, in the hut of two Lapp sorcerers, embodied all the violence and guile that mingled with the nobler temper of the northmen. He was but a boy of twelve when his father gave him five long-ships, and his next four years were spent in Wiking cruises in the Baltic and the northern seas. "Then he sailed out into the West Sea, and plundered in Scotland, Bretland, Ireland, and Walland," our France, for four years more. A raid on the Finns ended these early

[1] Harald Fair-hair's Saga; Laing, "Sea Kings," i. 313.

Chap. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

cruises, and won him Gunhild; and, still on the brink of manhood, he came home to be welcomed by Harald Fair-hair as his successor on the throne of Norway. With his brothers who stood in his way he dealt roughly. Rognwald, who was charged with witchcraft, "he burned in a house along with eighty other warlocks, which work was much praised." Biorn, the merchant king, he slew drinking at his board. But a younger brother, Hakon, still remained, and when Hakon at his father's death promised the bonders their old udal rights back again Norway broke out in revolt. "The news" that their rights were once more their own "flew like fire in dry grass through the whole land:"[1] all men streamed to Hakon; and Eric, left alone, had to give up the strife, and "sail out into the western seas with such as would follow him."

Eric set over Northumbria.

It was in the days after Brunanburh that Eric's plunder-raid brought him to the shores of Northumbria; and Æthelstan seized the chance of balancing the Danish element in Northumbria by the Norwegian element that was mingled with it.[2] A bargain was soon struck by which Eric submitted to baptism with all his house, and received the kingdom of Northumbria at Æthelstan's hand on pledge to guard it against Danes or other

[1] Hakon the Good's Saga; Laing, "Sea Kings," i. 315.

[2] In 924 the peoples in Northumbria who "bowed" to Eadward are separately named, either "English, or Danes, or northmen."—Eng. Chron. a. 924.

Wikings.[1] Little as we know of the Danelaw, we see that the life he found there was a life as northern as that of his own northern lands, for "Northumbria," runs the Saga, "was mainly inhabited by northmen. Since Lodbrog's sons had taken the country, Danes and northmen often plundered there, when the power of the land was out of their hands. . . . King Eric, too, had many people about him, for he kept many northmen who had come with him from the east, and also many of his friends joined him from Norway." In taking the land he had pledged himself to hold it "against Danes or other Wikings," and had received baptism, "together with his wife and children and all his people who had followed him." But pledge and Christianity sate as lightly on Eric as they sate on his fellow northmen in the Danelaw. If the Danes had settled down in farm and homestead, they were long before they ceased to vary their toil with the Wiking's plunder-raid; and Eric, throned as he was at York, was like his subjects a Wiking at heart. "As he had little lands, he went on a cruise every summer, and plundered in Shetland, the Hebrides, Iceland, and Bretland, by which he gathered goods."[2]

Though Æthelstan's rule over the north had

[1] For Eric, see Sagas of Harald Fair-hair and of Hakon the Good; Laing, "Sea Kings," i. 301-306, 311-316. See also Saga of Egil Skallagrimson.

[2] Saga of Hakon the Good; Laing, "Sea Kings," i. 316-317.

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

Lewis from over-sea.

shrunk from a real sovereignty into a vague overlordship, it is notable that his efforts from this moment were aimed at other lands than the Danelaw. He still remained bent on the ruin of the power which was able to call the Danelaw to arms. Even in the midst of his struggle for life with the great confederacy of the north the king had been busy planning a more formidable attack than ever on the Normans. During his father's last misfortunes, Lewis, the child of Charles the Simple and of the king's sister Eadgifu, had found with his mother a refuge in England, and had grown up at his uncle's court. When Rudolf died, and Hugh of Paris, with a cautious policy which time was to reward, refused to grasp the crown, the hearts of the West-Franks turned to the young Karoling "over-sea," and at Hugh's instigation Lewis was chosen for their king. The envoys who were sent in 936 with the offer of the crown found Æthelstan in his camp at York, holding down the earlier disaffection of the Danelaw, but the king at once rode to the south; and an English embassy crossed the Channel to prepare for the return of Lewis to his father's throne. From the court of Duke Hugh they passed to the court of William Longsword on a visit memorable as the first instance of direct political communication between England and Normandy. We know little of the negotiations which ended in the duke's assent to the accession of the Karoling. William,

no doubt, saw through the aim of Æthelstan in his nephew's elevation; but to refuse Lewis was to set a stronger and more formidable neighbour, Hugh the Great, on the throne. Through the life too of Charles the Simple, the Normans had been the great support of the Karolingian house; and the duke may have believed that when once the crown was on his brow the old rivalry of the House of Paris would again throw the son of Charles, whatever were his uncle's plans, into the arms of the Normans. William at any rate wrung from Æthelstan a heavy price for his assent to his nephew's crowning. Brittany had been one of the king's readiest weapons against the Normans; and Alan with a train of Breton refugees was still at the English court. But peace was now arranged between Breton and Norman, and Alan, returning to his native land, pledged himself to keep peace with William Longsword.

Lewis and Æthelstan.

With what aims Æthelstan had set his nephew on the French throne, the action of Lewis was to show. The boy had sworn to follow the counsels of his nobles, and in the first days of his reign he submitted to the guidance of Duke Hugh. But the victory of Brunanburh soon followed his return, and Æthelstan was now free to give his whole support to his nephew's cause. The certainty of English aid at once gave a new energy to the young king's action. He broke utterly from his father's policy. Instead of relying on the Normans

CHAP. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

against the pressure of the House of Paris, he stood aloof from both these powers. He declared himself independent of Hugh, and summoned from England his English mother to give into her charge his royal city of Laon. The hand of the English king was seen in the political combinations that followed this step. Between the lands of Æthelstan's cousin Arnulf of Flanders and the Norman duchy lay the county of Ponthieu, then probably, as at a later time, an outpost of the Norman power. In 939 Count Herlwin of Ponthieu was attacked by Arnulf, his city of Montreuil taken, and his wife and children who were found in it sent as prisoners to Æthelstan "to be kept in hold over sea." The attack was possibly made with the aid of an English fleet which we shall soon see busy in the Channel; and that it was really aimed at the Normans we gather from the action of their duke, for William Longsword at once marched on Montreuil, recovered the town, and ravaged Arnulf's borders. The war with Arnulf, however, threatened to widen into the larger contest which Æthelstan had no doubt designed. Lewis drew towards the foes of the Normans; his bishops excommunicated William Longsword; and their sentence seemed the prelude for a joint attack of the two kings and the count on the northmen in France.

Failure of their league.

But at the moment of their execution the combinations of the English king were again

frustrated by a turn in Frankish politics. The old loyalty of Lorraine to the House of Charles the Great revived at the sight of a Karolingian sovereign at Laon. On the coronation of Otto as king of the East-Franks at Aachen, Lorraine threw off the German rule; and though Lewis rejected the first offer of its allegiance, he yielded to a second. The war with Otto which naturally followed drew all the efforts of the Frankish king from Normandy to his eastern borderland, where for a time Lorraine passed into the hands of Lewis. But his winning of it caused a sudden change in the position of the young king in Frankland itself. He had for three years stood aloof from the control of the Parisian duke, and now the addition of Lorraine to his realm threatened Hugh with a master too great for his power to check. Parisian duke and Norman duke, both equally threatened by the king, drew together against their common enemy at the moment when his force was spent by the contest for Lorraine; and their league was soon joined by a prince of almost equal strength. If Arnulf of Flanders dreaded the growth of Normandy, he dreaded yet more the growth of a royal power strong enough to curb the new states which were parting Western Frankland between them; and the winning of Lorraine by the young king drew him, like his fellows, into revolt. But though the ambition of Lewis had foiled the policy of Æthelstan, the

CHAP. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

king clung to his nephew's cause. When rumours of Arnulf's approaching defection and of the attack he was planning on Laon reached England, an English fleet with forces on board appeared off the coast of Boulogne. Its ravages however failed to turn Arnulf from his purpose; and on the news that in the face of these dangers Lewis was still fairly holding his own in Lorraine, it fell back to its English harbour.

Eadmund.

The recall of the fleet may have been due to the failing health of Æthelstan; for on the twenty-seventh of October, 940,[1] in the midst of these wide projects, the king died at Gloucester; and the troubles which followed the succession of his brother Eadmund left little room for a display of energy across the sea. Though he had fought by Æthelstan's side at Brunanburh, Eadmund, a child of Eadward's third marriage with Eadgifu,[2] was a youth of eighteen when he mounted the throne. But he had already a policy of his own, and that a policy distinct from the system of Æthelstan.[3]

[1] So the later Chronicles, probably from a lost annal in the Worcester copy. The Winchester Chronicle dates it 941.

[2] Æthelstan was the only son of Eadward's first marriage; both his sons by a second were dead; there remained two young sons by his third, Eadmund and Eadred.

[3] In Æthelstan's later years, after some more experiments, such as in 935, "basileus Anglorum et æque totius Britanniæ orbis curagulus" (Cod. Dip. 1111), or in 937, "rex Anglorum et æque totius Albionis gubernator" (Cod. Dip. 1114; it is notable that he never recurs to his "Imperator" and "Brytenwealda"), the royal style had at last settled down into a single form. From 938 at any rate it is almost uniformly "Basileus Anglorum cunctarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium," and the

"He was no friend to the northmen,"[1] or to the system of balances by which his brother had used the Norwegians of the Danelaw to hold down the Danes. Eric too was in no favour with him. As southern England became day by day a realm more peaceful and highly organized, the instincts of its statesmen must have revolted more and more from the wild barbarism of the north, where Eric, with his false and cruel Gunhild beside him, remained in spite of his baptism the mere pirate he had landed. So "the word went about that King Eadmund would set another chief over Northumbria." The threat was enough for Eric, who set off on new cruises of piracy, only now adding the English coast to his former field of prey; and at his departure the Danelaw rose once more against the English king.

The rising of the Danelaw.

The revolt was even more formidable than that which Æthelstan had faced at Brunanburh, for the rapidity with which the English army met Olaf and Constantine on that bloody field seems to have prevented the general rising of the English Danelaw on which the Ostmen had reckoned. But with a boy-king on the throne the spell of

signature, "rex totius Britanniæ" (Cod. Dip., a series of charters from 1116 to 1123, etc.). Eadmund adopts and generally uses the same description, though breaking out here and there, as in 940, into "rex Anglorum et curagulus multarum gentium" (Cod. Dip. 384), or in 941, "regni Anglorum basileus" (he signs here, "totius Britanniæ rex"; Cod. Dip. 1139), or in 946, "rex Anglorum necnon et Merciorum" (Cod. Dip. 409), but signs almost uniformly "rex Anglorum."

[1] Hakon's Saga; Laing, "Sea Kings," i. 317.

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

terror which the great defeat had thrown over the north was broken; the Danes again called for aid from their kinsmen in Ireland; and on the reappearance of Olaf in the Humber in 941 the Danelaw took fire.[1] The rising was not merely a rising of the Danes north of Humber, for after twenty years of quiet submission to the English rule, even the men of the Five Boroughs now threw off their allegiance and joined their kinsmen in Northumbria in taking Olaf for king; and the danger was heightened by an unlooked-for defection from the royal cause. In his appointment of Wulfstan to the primacy at York in 934 Æthelstan had trusted to secure a firm support for his rule in the north. We have already noted the new and independent position which had been given to the see of York by its isolation from the rest of the English Church. Its occupant became in fact even more the religious centre of northern Britain than the primate of Canterbury was as yet of southern Britain; and as the pagan settlers yielded to Christian influences, he rose to still greater importance as the natural centre of union between Englishman and Dane. The quick revolutions in the northern kingship, as well as its occasional parting between two rulers, must have

[1] The Winchester Chron. a. 942, gives here a fragment of a second poem on the deeds of Eadmund. As to Olaf, or Anlaf, Mr. Skene thinks this Olaf to be the King of Dublin, and that on his death soon after (Eng. Chron. Winch., a. 942) he was succeeded by the second Olaf, Sihtric's son, from Scotland. ("Celtic Scotland," i. 361.)

still further heightened the position of a spiritual head who remained unaffected by these changes; and in Archbishop Wulfstan the power of the primate rivalled the temporal authority of the northern kings. Till now Wulfstan's influence had been steadily exerted in support of the English sovereignty; though the names of the Danish Jarls are absent from Æthelstan's later witenagemots, Archbishop Wulfstan was still present at the English court; and in the opening of Eadmund's reign his attitude seems to have remained the same. He joined with his fellow primate to avert a conflict between the king and the Danes at Lincoln; and even in 942 we find him at Eadmund's court.[1] But whether he was swept away by the strength of local feeling or alienated by the king's West-Saxon policy, at this moment his course suddenly changed. Not only did he adopt the northern cause as his own, but in the after struggle he stood side by side with Olaf as commander of the northern host.

Eadmund's defeat.

Not content with freeing Northumbria, the Ostmen and primate burst in 943 into Mid-Britain, and their storm of Tamworth and of Leicester gave them the valley of the Trent. Eadmund was strong enough to regain the last city, and Wulfstan and Olaf had some difficulty in escaping from his grasp, but the work of even Eadward

1 "Wulfstan archiepiscopus urbis Eboracæ metropolitanus" attests a royal grant in 942. (Cod. Dip. 392.)

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

was undone, and after two years of hard fighting, the primates of York and Canterbury negotiated a peace in which Olaf bowed to baptism and owned himself Eadmund's under-king, but which practically left Eadmund master only of the realm that Ælfred had ruled.[1] The revival of the English Danelaw was the more formidable that with it went a revival of the Norman power across the sea. The death of Æthelstan had been as disastrous to his nephew as to his brother. It left Lewis friendless at a moment when the war on his eastern border turned suddenly against him, and he was driven by Otto from Lorraine. Pressed hard even in his own Frankland by Hugh the Great and Herbert of Vermandois, deserted by Arnulf of Flanders, the young king was thrown back on the policy of his father. He looked for aid to the Normans; and William Longsword was as ready to return to the policy of Hrolf as Lewis to that of Charles the Simple. Lewis was saved from ruin by Norman help; his fortunes were restored by the Norman sword; Norman diplomacy brought about a peace with Otto and a reconciliation with Hugh. The power which Æthelstan had threatened with destruction stood forward as the leading power in West-Frankland; and the greatness of Normandy gave encouragement and it may be direct aid to the struggle of the Danelaw against Eadward's son.

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 943.

But if wider hopes of common action dawned on the northmen, they were foiled at this moment of triumph by the murder of the Norman duke; for the wild vigour which had been turned into fighting power by William Longsword crumbled into anarchy as soon as his grasp was loosed; and his son Richard, a child of ten years old, was hardly seated in the ducal chair in 943 when strife broke out between the Normans who drew towards the religion and civilization of the land in which they had settled, and those who still clung to the old worship and traditions of the north. Lewis, thankless for the aid which had saved him, swung back at once to his older purpose, and seized the opening which the strife gave him for carrying out those plans of conquest over the Normans which had been so fatally interrupted by his schemes on Lorraine. His success was complete, for marching upon Rouen under pretext of aiding the young duke against the pagan reaction, he became master of the whole of Normandy without a blow. The sudden turn of affairs in France may have told on the other side of the Channel; it was at any rate at this juncture, in 994, that Eadmund rallied to a new attack on the Danelaw; and it was while Normandy lay at the feet of Lewis that he succeeded in driving out Olaf, Sihtric's son, and in again reducing it to submission.[1]

[1] He drove out its two kings, Olaf, Sihtric's son, and Ragnald, son of Sihtric's brother, Guthferth.—Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 944.

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

Cumbria and Strath-Clyde.

But the measures which followed its conquest showed that the young king possessed the political as well as the military ability of his house. What most hindered the complete reduction of the Danelaw was the hostility to the English rule of the states north of it, the hostility of Bernicia, of Strath-Clyde, and above all of the Scots. The confederacy against Æthelstan had been brought together by the intrigues of the Scot-king, Constantine; and though Constantine in despair at his defeat left the throne for a monastery, the policy of his son Malcolm was much the same as his father's.[1] Eadmund was no sooner master of the Danelaw than he dealt with this difficulty in the north. The English blood of the Bernicians was probably drawing them at last to the English monarch, for after Brunanburh we hear nothing of their hostility. But Cumbria was far more important than Bernicia, for it was through Cumbrian territory that the Ostmen could strike most easily across Britain into the Danelaw. The Cumbria, however, with which Eadmund dealt was far from being the old Cumbrian kingdom from the Eden to the Ribble, the southern part of which remained attached to the Northumbrian kingdom, even in the hands of the Danes, while the northern part, now known as Westmoringa-land, the land of the men of the western moors, had been colonized by Norwegian settlers.[2]

[1] Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 360-361.

[2] In 966, "Thored, Gunnar's son, harried Westmoringa-land," Eng. Chron. a. 966.

The land of the Western Moors.

Though a fragment of the Cumbrian kingdom which the sword of Ecgfrith had made [1] remained to the last in the hands of Northumbria, its bounds had been cut shorter and shorter. Under Eadberht the Northumbrian supremacy had reached as far as the district of Kyle in Ayrshire: and the capture of Alclwyd by his allies, the Picts, in 756, seemed to leave the rest of Strath-Clyde at his mercy. But from that moment the tide had turned; a great defeat shattered Eadberht's hopes; and in the anarchy which followed his reign district after district must have been torn from the weakened grasp of Northumbria, till the cessation of the line of her bishops at Whithern [2] tells that her frontier had been pushed back almost to Carlisle. But even after the land that remained to her had been in English possession for nearly a century and a half, it was still no English land. Its great landowners were of English blood,[3] and as the Church of Lindisfarne was richly endowed here, its priesthood was probably English too. But the conquered Cumbrians had been left by Ecgfrith on the soil, and in its local names we find few traces of any migration of the Engle over the moors from the east. There was little indeed to invite settlers save along the valleys of the Lune

[1] Between 670-675. See "Making of England," ii. 127. (A. S. G.).

[2] Badulf, the last bishop of Whithern of the Anglo-Saxon succession whose name is preserved, was consecrated in 791. Sim. Durh. ad ann. (A. S. G.).

[3] Robertson, "Scotland under Early Kings," vol. ii. p. 434.

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

or the Ribble; elsewhere the huge and almost unbroken stretch of woodland and moorland and marsh which covered our Lancashire must have been almost as wild and unpeopled as the dales scattered among the "Western-Moors" where St. Hubert found a "desert" for his hermitage. Carlisle indeed had carried on an unbroken life from its Roman and Celtic days; but it is doubtful whether life had as yet returned to the "ceaster" on the Lune, our Lancaster; and it was not till the tenth century that Eadward could set up his fort amidst the ruins of Mancunium.

The Norwegian settlers.

The "parting," however, of Deira in 876 among Halfdene's warriors drove English fugitives for refuge into the desert land. One such we see in a certain Ælfred, who "came, fearing the pirates, over the western hills, and sought pity from S. Cuthbert and Bishop Cutheard, praying that they should give him some lands."[1] But it was only to meet other assailants. Along the Irish Channel the boats of the Norwegian pirates were as thick as those of the Danish corsairs on the eastern coast; and the Isle of Man, which they had conquered and half colonized, served as a starting-point from which the marauders made their way to the opposite shores. Their settlements reach as far northward as Dumfriesshire, and southward perhaps to the little group of northern villages which we find in the Cheshire peninsula of the

[1] Sim. Durh. "Hist. S. Cuthb." (Twysden), p. 74.

Wirral. But it is in the Lake district and in the north of our Lancashire that they lie thickest.[1] Ormside and Ambleside, Kettleside and Silverside, recall the "side" or settle of Orm and Hamel, of Ketyl and Soelvar, as Ulverston and Ennerdale tell of Olafr and Einar. Buthar survives in Buttermere, Geit in Gatesgarth, and Skögul in Skeggles Water. The Wikings Sölvar and Böll and Skall may be resting beneath their "haugr" or tomb-mound at Silver How, Bull How, and Scale How.[2]

Cumbria given to Malcolm.

While this outlier of northern life was being planted about the lakes, the Britons of Strath-Clyde were busy pushing their conquests to the south; in Eadmund's day indeed we find their border carried as far as the Derwent;[3] but whether from the large space of Cumbrian ground they had won or no, the name of Strath-Clyde from this time disappears, and is replaced by the name of Cumbria.[4] Whether as Strath-Clyde or Cumbria, its rulers had been among the opponents of the

[1] "The Lake district seems to have been almost exclusively peopled by Celts and Norwegians. The Norwegian suffixes, gill, garth, haugh, thwaite, foss, and fell, are abundant; while the Danish forms, thorpe and toft, are almost unknown; and the Anglo-Saxon test-words, ham, ford, worth, and ton, are comparatively rare."—Taylor, "Words and Places," p. 115.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 116. For the Norwegian settlements in the lakes, see Ferguson's "Northmen in Cumberland and Westmoreland."

[3] Skene, "Celtic Scotland," i. 362.

[4] Westmoringa-land survives, little changed in area, in our Westmoreland; our Cumberland is the fragment of the Strath-Clyde or Cumbrian kingdom which remained to England after the rest had gone to the Scottish kings.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

West-Saxon advance; they were among the confederates against Eadward as they were among the confederates against Æthelstan; and it was no doubt in return for a like junction in the hostilities against himself that Eadmund in 945 "harried all Cumberland." But he turned his new conquest adroitly to account by using it to bind to himself the most dangerous among his foes; for he granted the greater part of it to the Scottish king on the terms that Malcolm should be "his fellow-worker by sea and land."[1] In the erection of this northern dependency we see the same forces acting, though on a more distant field, which had already begun the disintegration of the English realm in the formation of the great ealdormanries of the eastern coast. Its immediate results, however, were advantageous enough. Scot and Welshman, whose league had till now formed the chief force of opposition to English supremacy in the north, were set at variance; the road of the Ostmen was closed; while the fidelity of the Scot-king seemed to be secured by the impossibility of holding Cumbria against revolt without the support of his "fellow-worker" in the south.

The feud.

Hard as Eadmund had been pressed by these outer troubles, he had been far from neglecting the work of government at home. While the efforts of Æthelstan had been mainly directed to the security of order and of property, Eadmund

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 945.

dealt with the more formidable difficulty of the right of feud. The evil with which he dealt, and his attempts to reform it, have been already noticed in the sketch given of the history of English justice.[1] In spite of all bounds and limitations by which the rights of private vengeance had been restrained, the feud in Eadmund's day remained wholly incompatible with the new social order that had been developed alike by Christianity and by the growing sense of a common national life. Early justice had rested on the family bond, on the theory of the kinsfolk bound together by ties of mutual responsibility for vengeance and aid in self-defence. But as society became more complex it outgrew in great measure these earlier ties of blood; and the conception of personal responsibility which Christianity had taught helped to weaken the bonds of kinship. Eadmund shared in the "horror of the unrighteous and manifold fightings" which was felt in his day, and in his attempt to lay on the man-slayer himself the whole burden of his deed, to free his kinsfolk from the obligation of bearing the feud, and to protect them from the vengeance of the slain man's kin,[2] he not only attacked the custom of the feud, but struck a heavy blow at the old theory of kinship with its traditional responsibilities.

From questions of home government, however, Death of Eadmund.

[1] See ch. i. pp. 27-31.

[2] Ll. Eadmund. Thorpe, "Anc. Laws," i. 249.

Chap. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

the young king was soon called back to outer affairs. For the moment the triumphs of the two cousins on either side of the Channel seemed to have realized the hopes of Æthelstan. In England and France alike the men of the north lay at the feet of Lewis and Eadmund, for the presence of the northern primate and northern Jarls, at the English court for the first time since Brunanburh, showed that the Danelaw was again subdued.[1] But the Danelaw had hardly given its allegiance to Eadmund when a sudden revolution wrested Normandy from his cousin's grasp. A fleet under the King of Denmark, Harald Blaatand, moored off the Cotentin and called the country to arms. The Normans gathered round the Danish host, while Duke Hugh, jealous of the power Lewis had won from his conquest on the Seine, joined the king's foes; and in 945 a victory of their united forces on the Dive broke the Frankish yoke. Not only was the king's army defeated, but Lewis himself was taken in the fight and given as a prisoner into the hands of Duke Hugh. The demand of Eadmund for his cousin's liberation shows that the two kings had been acting in concert against the northmen, while the answer of Hugh is notable as the first of a series of such defiances which from that day to this have passed between the lands on either side of the Channel.

[1] For Wulfstan, see Cod. Dip. 409. For the Jarls "Scule" and "Halfdene," Cod. Dip. 410.

"I will do nothing for the Englishmen's threats!" said the duke. "Let them come and they will soon find what men of the Franks are worth in fight; or if they fear to come, they shall know at some time or other the might of the Franks and pay for their arrogance!" Master of all England at twenty-four, Eadmund could hardly have passed by a challenge such as this. But the quarrel was suddenly hushed by his death.[1] As he feasted at Pucklechurch in the May of 946, Leofa, a robber whom the king had banished from the land, entered the hall, seated himself at the royal board, and drew his sword on the cup-bearer when he bade him retire. Eadmund sprang in wrath to his thegn's aid, and, seizing Leofa by the hair, flung him to the ground, but in the struggle the robber drove his dagger to the king's heart.

Dunstan.

With the death of Eadmund a new figure comes to the front of English affairs, and the story of Abbot Dunstan of Glastonbury gives us a welcome glimpse into the inner life of England at a time when history hides it from us beneath the weary details of wars with the Danes.[2] In the heart of

[1] Eng. Chron. (Winch.), a. 496. Will. Malm. "Gest. Reg." (Hardy), i. 228.

[2] The primary authority for Dunstan's life is an anonymous biography, written about A.D. 1000, a few years after his death, by a Saxon priest. Professor Stubbs, who has collected the various biographies in his "Memorials of S. Dunstan," has made it probable that this is a work of an exiled scholar from Liège, who was present in England at the archbishop's death, and was living under his protection. A second work, by Adelard of Ghent, was drawn up in the form of lessons to

CHAP. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

Somerset, at the base of the Tor, a hill that rose out of the waste of flood-drowned fen which then filled the valley of Glastonbury, lay in Æthelstan's day the estate of Heorstan, a man of wealth and noble blood, the kinsman of three bishops of the time and of many thegns of the court, if not of the king himself.[1] It was in Heorstan's hall that his son Dunstan, as yet a fair diminutive child with scant but beautiful hair, caught the passion for music that showed itself in his habit of carrying harp in hand on journey or visit, as in his love

be read in the service of the monastery at Canterbury, and is hardly of later date than the first. After the Conquest a third life, much expanded, was drawn up by Osbern, and a fourth by Eadmer, both monks of Canterbury, while a little later on William of Malmesbury compiled a fifth, whose purpose was to bring out more fully Dunstan's connexion with Glastonbury. Even in the few years that passed between Dunstan's death and the life by Adelard a luxuriant growth of legend had taken place; but it is to the three last biographers that the wilder stories which gathered round the archbishop's name are mainly due. The life by the priest of Liège is simply disfigured by verbosity, and bears traces of deriving most of the earlier biographic details from the talk of Dunstan himself; its information and its silences (as in the history of Eadgar) are both probably due to this source. But even this antedates the monastic struggle, which had become so important at the time of its composition, by confusing it with the strife in Eadwig's reign. ("Memor. of Dunstan," Introd. p. vii.) Such as they are however, all these lives are of value for a time when we have, save in the meagre annals of the Chronicle, no contemporary materials but these and a few other hagiographies (Stubbs, "Memorials of Dunstan," Introd. p. ix.).

[1] Bishop Elfege of Winchester and Kynesige of Lichfield were his kinsmen (see Saxon biographer, "Memorials," pp. 13, 32). So, says Adelard (*ibid.* 55), was Archbishop Æthelm of Canterbury, but this may be a mistake for Bishop Æthelgar of Crediton. For his kin among the "Palatini," see Saxon Biogr. "Memor." p. 11. Æthelflæd, Æthelstan's niece, was also related to him (*ibid.* p. 17).

for the "vain songs of ancient heathendom, the trifling legends, and funeral chants,"[1] relics doubtless of a mass of older poetry that time has reft from us. But nobler strains than those of ancient heathendom were round the child as he grew to boyhood.[2] Ælfred's strife with the northmen was fresh in the memory of all. Athelney lay a few miles off across the Polden hills; and Wedmore, where the final frith was made and the chrism-fillet of Guthrum unloosed, rose out of the neighbouring marshes. Memories of Ine met the boy as he passed to school at Glastonbury, which still remained notable as a place of pilgrimage, though but a few secular priests clung to the house which the king had founded, and its lands had for the most part been stripped from it.[3] The ardour of

[1] Sax. Biog. ("Memor." p. 11), "avitæ gentilitatis vanissima didicisse carmina, et historiarum frivolas colere incantationum nænias."

[2] The date of his birth is a vexed question. "Hujus (Æthelstani) imperii temporibus oritur puer," says the Saxon biographer ("Memor." p. 6). The English Chronicle (though in what is probably a later insertion) takes "oritur" for "is born," and with all after-writers places his birth in Æthelstan's first year, 924 or 925. But if so, his appearance and expulsion from Æthelstan's court must have been before he was sixteen; his appointment as Abbot of Glastonbury at any rate before Eadmund's death in 946, when he was still but twenty-two; and his career as guide and counsellor of Eadred must have been between the ages of twenty-two and thirty-one. This seems very improbable, and the "oritur" may perhaps be fairly construed "rises into notice," which would throw back his birth into the days of Eadward. Granting this, Adelard's statement that Archbishop Æthelm, who died in the same year with Eadward, first brought him to court, may be true ("Memor." p. 55, and Introd. p. lxxviii.).

[3] It had a church "built by no art of man"; to which

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

Dunstan's temper was seen in the eagerness with which he plunged into the study of letters; and his knowledge became at last so famous in the neighbourhood that news of it reached the court. Dunstan was called there, no doubt as one of the young nobles who received their training in attendance on the king during boyhood and early youth;[1] but his appearance was the signal for a burst of jealousy among the royal thegns, though many were kinsmen of his own; he was forced to withdraw, and when he was again summoned on the accession of Eadmund his rivals not only drove him from the king's train, but threw him from his horse as he rode through the marshes, and with the wild passion of their age trampled him underfoot in the mire.[2]

Made Abbot of Glastonbury.

The outrage brought fever, and in the bitterness of disappointment and shame Dustan rose from his bed of sickness a monk.[3] But in England the monastic profession was at this time little more than a vow of celibacy and clerical life,[4] and his devotion took no ascetic turn. His nature in fact

Æthelstan went on pilgrimage, and where "Hiberniensium peregrini" came to visit the tomb of a younger Patrick, bringing their books with them, which Dunstan read (Sax. Biog. "Memor." pp. 7, 10, 11).

[1] His age shows that this must be the meaning of the Saxon biographer's "inter regios proceres et palatinos principes electus" ("Memor." p. 21).

[2] Sax. Biog. ("Memor." p. 12).

[3] *Ibid.* p. 14. He had been tonsured as a clerk from boyhood (p. 10).

[4] See Stubbs, "Mem. of Dunstan," Introd. lxxxiii.-v.

was sunny, versatile, artistic, full of strong affections and capable of inspiring others with affections as strong. Throughout his life he won the love of women, and in these earlier years of retirement at Glastonbury he became the spiritual guide of a woman of high rank who lived only for charity and the entertainment of pilgrims. "He ever clave to her and loved her in wondrous fashion." Quick-witted, of tenacious memory, a ready and fluent speaker, gay and genial of address, an artist, a musician, an indefatigable worker alike at books or handicraft, his sphere of activity widened as the wealth of his devotee was placed unreservedly at his command. We see him followed by a train of pupils, busy with literature, harping, painting, designing. In one pleasant tale of these days a lady summons him to her house to design a robe which she is embroidering, and as Dunstan bends with her maidens over their toil the harp which he has hung on the wall sounds without mortal touch tones which the startled ears around frame into a joyous antiphon. But the tie which bound Dunstan to this scholar-life was broken by the death of his patroness; and towards the close of Eadmund's reign the young scholar was again called to the court. Even in Æthelstan's day he seems to have been known to both the younger sons of Eadward the Elder; and with one of these, Eadred, his friendship became of the closest kind. But the old jealousies revived; his life was again

Chap. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

in danger; and the game seemed so utterly lost that Dunstan threw himself on the protection of some envoys who had come at this time from the German court of Otto to the English king.[1] He was preparing to return with them to their home in Saxony when an unlooked-for chance restored him suddenly to power. A red-deer which Eadmund was chasing over Mendip dashed down the Cheddar cliffs, and the king only checked his horse on the brink of the ravine. In the bitterness of anticipated death he had repented of his injustice to Dunstan; and on his return from the chase the young priest was summoned to his presence. "Saddle your horse," said Eadmund, "and ride with me!" The royal train swept over the marshes to Dunstan's home; and greeting him with the kiss of peace, the king seated him in the abbot's chair as Abbot of Glastonbury.[2]

Eadred.

From that moment Dunstan may have exercised some influence on public affairs; but it was not till Eadmund's murder that his influence became supreme. Eadmund was but twenty-five years old when he died; and as his children, Eadwig and Eadgar, were too young to follow him on the

[1] "Regni orientis nuncii cum rege tunc hospitantes."—Sax. Biog. ("Memor." p. 23). I follow the suggestion of Professor Stubbs as to this "Eastern Realm."

[2] Kemble places this before 940, on faith of a charter (Cod. Dip. 384) of that year; but Professor Stubbs regards his signature as a later insertion. He certainly signed as abbot in 946 (Cod. Dip. 411); and his nomination was probably not much earlier (Stubbs, "Mem. of Dunstan," Introd. p. lxxx.).

throne, the crown passed to his last surviving brother, the Ætheling Eadred.[1] Eadred had long been bound by a close friendship to Dunstan; and a friendship as close bound the young abbot to the mother of the king, the wife of Eadward the Elder, who seems to have wielded the main influence at Eadred's court. It was of even greater moment that Dunstan seems to have been linked by a close intimacy with the "Half-King" Æthelstan. The fact that Æthelstan's wife Ælfwen is said to have been the foster-mother of Eadgar,[2] as well as his own elevation, proves the influence of the East-Anglian ealdorman in the reign of Eadmund; he was in fact already "Primarius,"[3] a post which reminds us of the office of Ælfred as "Secundarius," as possibly a germ of the later Justiciarship, and which at any rate placed him near to the king himself in the government of the realm. Under Eadred his influence became yet greater; he seems to have displaced Wulfgar, whose signature through Eadmund's days had preceded his own, as the leading counsellor of the crown, and signs first of all secular nobles through the coming reign.[4] It was with the support of Æthelstan that Dunstan from this moment stood among Eadred's advisers.

The fourfold realm.

Of his political work indeed we know little,

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 946.

[2] Robertson, "Hist. Essays," 180.

[3] Sax. Biogr. ("Memor. of Dunstan"), p. 44. "Cujusdam primarii ducis, utpote Ælfstani;" and again, "prædicto comitante secum Primario."

[4] See the charters of these reigns in the Codex Diplomaticus.

CHAP. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

but we can hardly mistake his hand in the solemn proclamation which announced the king's crowning at Kingston.[1] The crowning of Eadred indeed was a fresh step forward towards a national kingship. His election was the first national election, the first election by a witenagemot where Briton and Dane and Englishmen were alike represented, where Welsh under-kings and Danish jarls sate side by side with English nobles and bishops. His coronation was in the same way the first national coronation, the first union of the primate of the north and the primate of the south in setting the crown on the head of one who was to rule from the Forth to the Channel.[2] In the phrase which describes the new king as "designated by the choice of the nobles, and by the authority of the

[1] Cod. Dip. 411, a grant to the "pedisequus" Wulfric, apparently one of a number of coronation grants, at any rate of the first year, "quo sceptra diadematum Angul-Saxna cum Nordhymbris et Paganorum cum Brettonibus (Eadredus) gubernabat," is prefaced by what looks like a general proclamation of the new sovereign. "Concedente gratia Dei . . . contigit post obitum Eadmundi regis, qui regimina regnorum Angul-Saxna, et Nordhymbra, Paganorum Brettonumque, septem annorum intervallo regaliter gubernabat, quod Eadred frater ejus uterinus, electione optimatum subrogatus, pontificali auctoritate eodem anno catholice est rex et rector ad regna quadripartiti regiminis consecratus, qui denique rex in villa quæ dicitur regis, Cyngestun, ubi consecratio peracta est, plura plurimis perenniter condonavit carismata." This is attested by the two archbishops, Odo and Wulfstan, ten bishops, "Howael regulus, Marcant, Cadmo," and by "Urm, Imorcer eorl, Grim, Audcoll eorl," and "Dunstan abbud."

[2] At the death of Æthelstan, Northumbria stood apart with its own under-king, so that such a Witenagemot was impossible.

bishops consecrated king," we may catch a foreshadowing of the constitutional theory which Dunstan afterwards embodied in the crowning and coronation oath of Eadgar at Bath, as his attempt to find a general name for the royal dominions in the "Fourfold Realm" shows a fresh advance towards his final conception of a Kingdom of England.[1]

Eric Hiring.

Eadred's first year was a time of quiet. After the peace with Eadmund, Olaf, Sihtric's son, so long the foe of the English kings but now apparently acting as their under-king, seems to have reigned beyond the Tees, while Ragnald, Guthferth's son, ruled in our Yorkshire. The north submitted quietly to Eadred's rule, while the Scots renewed the oath

[1] Eadred, like his brother, commonly signs himself "Rex Anglorum," and styles himself "Rex Anglorum cæterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium," etc. (Cod. Dip. 413, 1156, 1157, 1159, 1161-1164), a phrase which the "fourfold realm" now enables us to define. The "peoples surrounding" the English are strictly the "Britons," "Pagans" or Danes of Mid-Britain, and "Northumbrians." Among the variations we find "rex et primicerius totius Albionis," Cod. Dip. 1168; and in a number of other charters "totius Albionis monarchus et primicerius," *ibid.* 425, "rex Albionis," *ibid.* 1167. In 949 Eadred is he "quem Northymbra paganorumque seu cæterarum sceptro provinciarum Rex Regum omnipotens sublimavit, quique præfatus Imperator semper Deo grates dignissimus largâ manu subministrat," Cod. Dip. 424. But another charter of the same year shows that this "Imperator" must be taken in a rhetorical rather than technical use; "Eadredus rex Anglorum, rectorque Nordhanymbra, et Paganorum imperator, Brittonumque propugnator," Cod. Dip. 426, where we have the fourfold realm recurring, and the "Empire" restricted to the Danes of Mid-Britain. In 955 however the style became really Imperial, "Angul-Seaxna Eadred cyning et casere totius Brittanniæ," Cod. Dip. 433.

CHAP. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

of "fellow-workmanship" which they had given to his predecessor in exchange for the cession of Cumbria.[1] The country however soon became restless enough to call for the king's presence; and in the following year, 947,[2] Eadred advanced to "Taddenescylf," and there received the oath of personal allegiance from the Northumbrian witan. Among them the chronicle makes no mention of any under-kings at all, and Wulfstan stands alone as the foremost man of the north. But formal as the recognition was, neither witan nor archbishop were long bound by it.[3] "Within a little while" (apparently before the year was out) "they belied it all, both pledge and oath."[4] They may have been tempted to a rising by the presence of the Danish king, Harald Blaatand, or Blue Tooth, off their coast. The Danish kingdom which had been built up by Gorm the Old was now beginning to show under his son Harald the strength which was at last to bring about its conquest of England; and the fleets of Harald rode triumphant alike in the Baltic and the British Channel. Fortunately however for Eadred, Harald's efforts in the latter quarter were mainly directed to the support of the

[1] Eng. Chron. a. 946. [2] *Ibid.* (Worcester), a. 947.

[3] Wulstan however must have been at Eadred's court in 947, 948, and 949, as he signs charters in all these years (Cod. Dip. 1157, 1158, 1159, 1161, 1162, 1163, 424, 425, 426), so that he can hardly have taken any active part in this rising.

[4] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 947. This is the only chronicle that gives much information as to this reign: that of Winchester tells only Eadred's accession and death.

Norman Duchy, which was still hard pressed by its neighbours, and in which he hoped to find a base for a Danish conquest of Western Frankland. But though bent on this aim, he still found room for wider projects; he had already established one son as King of Semland in the Baltic, and if, after the completion of his work in Normandy in 945, he turned to re-establishing the power of the Skioldungs in Britain, it would account for the reception of his son Eric by the Northumbrians at this juncture as their king.[1]

Eric driven out.

It is possible that the sight of their English ruler had roused fresh hopes of independence in the breasts of the Northumbrians. The house of Ælfred was already showing signs of that physical exhaustion and degeneracy, which was to reveal itself in the premature manhood and equally premature deaths of Eadwig and Eadgar, in the weakness of Æthelred, and the feeble frame of the childless Confessor. Though Eadred was in the prime of life, he was suffering from a disease which in a few years hurried him to the tomb; and the Danish warriors may well have looked with scorn on a sick man's sword.[2] But no trace of weakness showed itself in the king's action. As

[1] The later English chronicles confound this Eric Hiring with the Norwegian Eric Blood-axe. See however Adam of Bremen, ii. 15: "Haraldus Hiring filium suum misit in Angliam, qui subactâ insulâ a Northumbris tandem proditus et occisus est."

[2] See Saxon Biography of Dunstan; Stubbs, "Memorials of Dunstan," p. 31.

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

soon as winter was over he marched in 948 on the north, and "ravaged all Northumberland, for that they had taken Eric for their king."[1] The firing of the minster at Ripon, where Wilfrid had lavished the resources of his art, and which had escaped the ruin of the Danish storm, made this raid memorable in the annals of the north; the king's force was too overwhelming for resistance, and it was only as he withdrew to the south over the wrecked country that the Danes ventured to gather in pursuit. They fell on his rear at Chesterford, and so heavy were the West-Saxon losses that Eadred in a burst of wrath threatened to turn back "and wholly ruin the land." But his threat was enough. The Danes abandoned Eric, made compensation to Eadred for the men who had fallen, and again submitted to his rule.[2]

Arrest of Archbishop Wulfstan.

In the rise and fall of Eric we may perhaps see a strife not only between the parties of resistance and of submisson, but also between the Danish and Norwegian settlers who shared the Danelaw, for hardly had he been forsaken, when in 949 Olaf, Sihtric's son, reappeared in Northumbria, where he ruled for the next three years.[3] Olaf no doubt

[1] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), 948.

[2] In 949 the Welsh, Danes, and Northumbrian jarls united for the last time in attesting a charter of Eadred.

[3] This is from a late Peterborough Chron. (E), a. 949, as our information even from the Worcester Chronicle ceases here, save that it tells of Wulfstan's arrest in 952. Skene, "Celt. Scot." i. 363, identifies this Olaf with Sihtric's son; Earle, "Paral. Chron." 118, note, makes him another Olaf.

ruled as a sub-king under Eadred, for there is no record of further strife; and the king must throughout these years have been quietly getting a firmer grip on the Danelaw. In 952 indeed he ventured on an act which marked him as its master. The submission after Chesterford had no doubt won pardon for Wulfstan's share in the revolt that so soon followed his oath-taking at Taddenescylf, as for the share of his fellow-rebels; but to the English court, where the young king and his ministers were alike swayed by a religious revival, the forswearing of an archbishop took a different colour from that of a Dane, nor had the primate's course during the years that followed been free from charges of fresh disloyalty.[1] He "had been often accused to the king," but it was not till 952 that he was seized, and brought as a prisoner before Eadred in the fortress of Jedburgh.[2]

The Northumbrian earldom.

The arrest of the archbishop was due no doubt to suspicions of his complicity in a fresh rising in Northumbria, where Olaf was in the same year driven out by his subjects and Eric Hiring again received as their king.[3] Of the strife that followed

[1] As we have seen, Wulfstan's presence at Eadred's Court in 947 and 948 is hardly compatible with any active sharing in the rising of the north during these years. He is there still in 949 (Cod. Dip. 424, 425, 426, 427); but I do not see his name afterwards.

[2] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 952. He was released two years after on the death of Eric, *ibid.* 954.

[3] This is again from the late Peterborough Chronicle, and may possibly be a mere blunder for Eric's reception in 949, as given in the Worcester Chronicle (D), which knows nothing of these later events.

CHAP. VI.

Wessex and the Danelaw.

937-955.

through the next two years we know only the close, the renewed expulsion of Eric, and the fresh submission of the Danelaw to Eadred.[1] But short and uneventful as the struggle was, it was the last; for with the submission of 954 the long work of Ælfred's house was done. Dogged as his fight had been, the Dane at last owned himself beaten; from the moment of Eadred's final triumph all resistance came to an end; and the close of the under-kingdom proclaimed that the north was brought into the general organization of the English realm. The policy of the great ealdormanries however triumphed again over that of national union. Though Eadred in 954 "took," like Æthelstan, "to the kingdom of the Northumbrians,"[2] he made no attempt to restore the direct rule of Æthelstan's early years. He contented himself with reducing the under-kingdom to an earldom, and governing it through an Englishman instead of a Dane. Oswulf, who had till now held a semi-independent position as "high-reeve" of Bernicia, was set over both Bernicia and Deira as earl of the Northumbrians.

[1] The account in the Chronicle differs widely here from that of the later Saga of Hakon the Good (Laing's "Sea-kings," i. 318), which takes this Eric for Blood-axe, the son of Harald Fair-hair, who enters Northumbria for plunder, encounters a king named Olaf, "whom King Eadmund had set to defend the land," and falls in battle against fearful odds. [According to the editors of the Corp. Poet. Boreale (G. Vigfusson and F. York Powell) a yet earlier tradition also points to Eric Blood-axe, i. 259, ii. 489 (A. S. G.).]

[2] Eng. Chron. (Worc.), a. 954.

Dunstan seems to have accompanied the king into Northumbria after its subjugation, at least as far as Chester-le-Street, where he saw the remains of St. Cuthbert still resting in the temporary refuge which they had found after their removal from Lindisfarne;[1] and it was probably under his counsel that Eadred resolved to put an end to the subject royalty of the north and to set up the new earldom of the Northumbrians. The abbot's post probably answered in some way to that of the later chancellor;[2] and as we find the hoard in his charge at the end of the reign,[3] he must then have combined with this the office of the later treasurer. Of the details of his political work however during this period nothing is told us. But of the intellectual and literary work which he was carrying on throughout the reign we are allowed to see a little more. It was in fact in these nine years that the more important part of his educational work was done. If much of his time was necessarily spent at Winchester or with the royal court, the bulk of it seems still to have been given to his Abbey of Glastonbury, and to the school which was growing up within its walls. He himself led the way in the work of teaching. Tradition told of the kindliness with which he won

The School at Glastonbury.

[1] Stubbs, "Mem. of Dunst." p. 379.

[2] In 949 at the close of a grant to Reculver we find "Ego Dunstan indignus abbas rege Eadredo imperante hanc domino meo hereditariam Cartulam dictitando composui, et propriis digitorum articulis perscripsi" (Cod. Dip. 425).

[3] Stubbs, "Mem. of Dunst." Introd. lxxxvi., lxxxvii.

the love of his scholars,[1] the psalms sung with them as they journeyed together, the vision that comforted Dunstan for the loss of one little scholar as he saw the child borne heavenwards in the arms of angels. In the library of Glastonbury some interesting memorials of his scholastic work were preserved even to the time of the Reformation, books on the Apocalypse, a collection of canons drawn from his Irish teachers, passages transcribed from Frank and Roman law-books, notes on measure and numbers, a pamphlet on grammar, a mass of biblical quotations, tables for calculating Easter, and a book on Ovid's Art of Love which jostled oddly with an English homily on the Invention of the Cross.[2]

Its influence on English literature.

From its remote site in the west, Glastonbury threw off an offshoot into Central Britain. In 955 Æthelwold, Dunstan's chief scholar and assistant in his educational work, received from Eadred a gift of the Abbey of Abingdon,[3] a house which we

[1] It is an amusing contrast to the common portraiture of Dunstan that at his own Canterbury a hundred years after his death he was regarded as the patron and protector of schoolboys. Once, in Anselm's time, when the yearly whipping-day arrived for the Cathedral school the poor little wretches crowded weeping to his shrine and sought aid from their "dear father Dunstan." Dunstan it was, so every schoolboy believed, who sent the masters to sleep, and then set them quarrelling till the whipping blew over.

[2] "Memor. of Dunst." Intr. cx.-xii. "Several of these pieces," says Prof. Stubbs, "contain British glosses, and furnish some of the earliest specimens of Welsh."

[3] Chron. Abingd. (ed. Stevenson), vol. i. 124. Æthelwold "disposuit ultra-marinas partes adire, causâ se imbuendi seu

noted as growing up in the eighth century by the side of the Thames, and which had since been ruined by the incursions of the Danes. Settling there with a few clerks from Glastonbury,[1] the new abbot soon gathered a school whose activity more than rivalled that of the house from which it sprang. From these two centres the movement spread through Wessex and Mercia. In both the impulse given by Ælfred had been checked, but not arrested, by the stress of war. So large a part of the mass of our early literature has been lost that we can hardly draw any conclusion from the scarcity of its remains in the period which followed the king's death; indeed, the larger and more literary tone of the English Chronicle through the reign of Eadward the Elder is a sufficient proof that the earlier intellectual movement had still its representatives through the first years of the struggle with the Danelaw.[2] Even when in Æthelstan's day the Chronicle sinks into meagre annals,

sacris libris seu monasticis disciplinis perfectius: sed prævenit venerabilis regina Eadgifu, mater regis Eadredi, ejus conamina, dans consilium regi ne talem virum sineret egredi de regno suo. Placuit tunc regi Eadredo, suadente matre sua, dare venerabili Athelwoldo quendam locum, vocabulo Abbandun."—Vit. Æthelwoldi, Chron. Abingdon (ed. Stevenson), vol. ii. 257. Did the writ "ne exeas regno" already exist?

[1] "Quem statim secuti sunt quidam clerici de Glastoniâ, hoc est Osgarus, Foldbirchtus, Frithegarus, et Ordbirchtus de Wintonia, et Eadricus de Lundoniâ."—Vit. Ethelwoldi, Chron. Abingd. (ed. Stevenson), ii. 258, an interesting passage, as showing from how wide a range Glastonbury had drawn.

[2] See the mention by Will. of Malmesbury of a book written in Æthelstan's time.—"Gest. Reg." (ed. Hardy), i. p. 209. (A. S. G.)

a fortunate chance reveals to us, in the battle-songs and death-songs embedded in its pages, the existence of a mass of English verse of which all memory would otherwise have perished. Side by side, too, with this statelier song we catch glimpses of a wilder and more romantic upgrowth of popular verse, which wrapped in an atmosphere of romance the lives of kings such as Æthelstan and Eadgar.[1]

Dunstan's own youth indeed, his zeal for letters, and the fact that he found books and teachers to meet his zeal, show that the impulse which Ælfred had given was far from having spent its force in his grandson's days. But there can be no doubt that the foundation of the two schools at Glastonbury and Abingdon gave to this impulse a new strength and guidance. It is from them that we must date the rise of the second old English literature, a literature which bears the stamp of Wessex, as the first had borne the stamp of Northumbria. In poetry this literature was, no doubt, inferior to its predecessor; there was nothing to rival the verse of Cadmon or the poems of Cynewulf. But the later time may justly claim as its own the

[1] Malmesbury has preserved for us in his "Gesta Regum" prose versions of some of these ballads. The ballads of Æthelstan are:—(1) The Birth of the King; (2) The Drowning of Eadwine; (3) The Craft of Anlaf. There are besides three ballads of Eadgar:—(1) The Slave Queen; (2) Eadgar and Ælfthryth; (3) Eadgar and the Scot-King. How vigorous this ballad literature was we see from the preservation of these down to the twelfth century, when they were introduced by the writers of the time into our history, much to its confusion.

creation of a stately historic verse of which fragments remain in the battle-songs of Brunanburh and Maldon, or the death-songs of Eadgar or Eadward. The love of poetry was seen even in the series of translations to which we really owe our knowledge of the earlier Northumbrian song. Save for a few lines embedded in Bæda or graven on the Rothewell cross, this mass of song in its Northumbrian dress has wholly vanished. What we learn of Cadmon or the lyrics, we have only in the West-Saxon garb which was given them at this period, and which witnesses to a new thirst for poetry in the south. But the bulk of the work done in this later time was a work of prose; and like that of Ælfred from which it started, of popular prose. Disappointed as we may be in a literary sense when we front its mass of homilies and scriptural versions and saints' lives and grammar and lesson-books, they tell us of a clergy quickened to a new desire for knowledge, and of a like quickening of educational zeal among the people at large.

Eadred's death.

But whatever was the result of Dunstan's literary work it was interrupted by Eadred's death. The young king was at the height of his renown. The real weakness of the royal power has yet to disclose itself, and the presence of great earls or ealdormen at Eadred's court only seemed to add to its lustre. The land had at last won peace. The jarls of the north, Urm and

CHAP. VI. Wessex and the Danelaw. 937-955.

Grim, and Gunnar and Scule, sat quietly in the witenagemot as they had sat in the witenagemots of Æthelstan. There too sat as quietly the princes of Wales, Morcant and Owen.[1] Such a mastery of Britain raised yet higher the pretensions of the crown. The reorganization of the Roman Empire at this juncture by Otto the Great, and the claim of supremacy which the emperor put forth over the countries of the west, may have given a fresh impulse to the assumption of titles which not only expressed the new might of the royal power, but indicated that the English king held himself to be fellow and not subject to the German.[2] It is at any rate in Eadred's last year of rule that we find the first clear instance of the use of a strictly imperial style in the titles of our king, for Eadred not only styled himself King of the Anglo-Saxons but "Cæsar of the whole of Britain."[3] What exact force lay in these pompous titles the English Chancery, if we may use the term of a later time, would possibly have found it hard to explain; vague however as they were, they no doubt expressed in some sort a claim to political supremacy over the whole British island

[1] Cod. Dip. 426, 433. When Eadred visits Abingdon, "contingit adesse sibi non paucos venientes gentis Northanhymbrorum," who got drunk over the feast, "inebriatis Northumbris statim ac vesperi recedentibus."—Vit. Ethelwoldi, Chron. Abingd. (ed. Stevenson), ii. 258.

[2] In 949 there were envoys of Eadred at Otto's court at Aachen.—Lappenberg, "Hist. Angl. Sax." ii. 156.

[3] Cod. Dip. 433.

as complete as that which Otto claimed over the western world. But while his clerks were framing these lofty phrases, the king's life was drawing to a close. Throughout his reign Eadred had fought against sickness and weakness of body as nobly as he had fought against the Dane,[1] and now that his work was done the over-wrought frame gave way. Dunstan was at Glastonbury, where the royal hoard was then in keeping, when news came in November, 955, that the king lay death-smitten at Frome.[2] The guardians of the hoard were bidden to bring their treasures that Eadred might see them ere he died; but while the heavy wains were still toiling along the Somersetshire lanes,[3] the death-howl of the women about the court told the abbot as he hurried onward that the friend he loved was dead.[4] He found the corpse already forsaken, for the thegns of the court had hurried to the presence of the new king; and Dunstan was left alone to carry Eadred to his grave beside Eadmund at Glastonbury.

Note.—The two following chapters cannot be considered as expressing Mr. Green's final view of the political state of England, and of the relations of the

[1] Sax. Biog. "Mem. of Dunstan" (Stubbs), p. 31.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] Eadred's death is dated Nov. 23, 955, Eng. Chron. ad. ann.
[4] Vit. Adelardi, "Mem. of Dunst." (Stubbs), p. 58.

ealdormen to the Crown, in the tenth century. His work on this period was cut short in the autumn of 1882 by illness and the necessity for leaving England, and these two chapters were hurriedly sketched out, and then laid aside for future reconsideration. In now printing them I wish to state clearly that they are unfinished work which had yet to receive the final examination and judgment of the writer. The materials for Chapter VII. in particular had not been put into any order, and the present arrangement of the subjects is my own. (A. S. G.)

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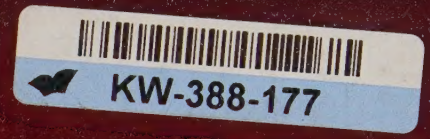
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